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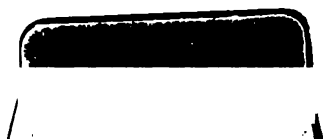
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THE
VILLAGE MILLIONAIRE.

BY

MISS LAMONT,

AUTHOR OF

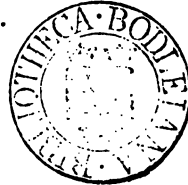
"THE FORTUNES OF WOMAN."

"And do you think them shames, which are nought else,
But the protractive trials of great Jove,
To find persistive constancy in man?
The firmness of which metal is not found
In fortune's love;
But in the wind and tempest of her frown,
Distinction winnows the light away,
And what hath mass, or matter by itself
Lies, rich in virtue and unminded."

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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THE
VILLAGE MILLIONAIRE.

CHAPTER I.

“No, my dear love is not the child of state,
Not subject to Time’s love, nor to Time’s hate;
For it was builded far from accident,
To this I witness call the fools of Time!”

SHAKSPEARE.

It was just at the time when what has been last recorded of Harriet and Gordon had taken place, that Colonel Aveley again mentioned to Lady Anne his desire to make his

final arrangements respecting his property. Her spirits sank at the allusion to his death more than even on former occasions, so that in the hope of rousing and amusing her, he confided to her his schemes for the young pair. He was much gratified, and he thought it highly complimentary to Gordon that, in spite of her leaning to the aristocratic in general, she joined him heartily in praising him.

She looked on the young Scotchman, she said, as one of the most rising young men whom she had ever known ; she doubted not his attaining the very highest honours of his profession. In reply to the Colonel's observations on his virtues, his truthfulness, his bravery, his talents, she remarked that Gordon was a good name ; that it had been borne by many distinguished military men, and that according to the usages of Highland clanship, his family must be considered as a branch of the great Gordons. Talked of

generals who had risen from the ranks, and had acquired enormous fortunes—of Lord Clive, who from a commercial life had stepped into a military one, and gained such high distinction.

Here her husband told her that such had been Gordon's case, he having been intended for mercantile pursuits, and having spent some years in them. This excited her imagination so much, that she saw our friend, the soldier, Lord Gordon, or Sir Angus Gordon, at least. But just when her fancies had reached this point, the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Harriet. She looked palely serene, and the searching eye of her uncle's love read something unusual in her composure. Even her aunt was struck by it.

"You are not looking well, my dear," said her aunt, "are you suffering in any way? One cannot but feel anxious about every change in this country you know."

Harriet thanked Lady Anne affectionately for her enquiries, acknowledged that she had a slight feeling of weariness—nothing more. “Unless, perhaps, a little low spirits,” she added, trying to rouse herself and to smile.

Her ladyship smiled in return ; but her smile was a meaning one, intended for the colonel, “We were speaking of Mr. Gordon, Harriet, when you came in,” she said.

“It is of him that I have just come to speak,” replied she, “you will be surprised, sir, to learn that he last night left this place for Calcutta.”

“Impossible !” exclaimed Colonel Aveley, “he could not do so after what I had communicated to him the day before !”

With difficulty could she induce her uncle to believe her tidings, and he was evidently deeply wounded by the mystery attending Gordon’s proceedings. The matter was discussed in every way that it could be without touching on what might hurt Harriet’s

delicacy whilst Lady Anne was present; but as soon as she was called away, the conversation between uncle and niece went on more frankly, with less restraint on the feelings of each.

Gordon being blamed for not announcing his intentions when he shewed so much emotion, on the colonel's informing him of his wishes with respect to her; she had to acknowledge that his emotion was caused by a decision, the object of which he dared not then declare to his friend. This sort of defence only seemed to make the matter worse. Colonel Aveley held that after such a proposal as he had made to him, he was bound in honour to be perfectly open on all his plans and intentions.

"But," said Harriet, kissing her uncle's hand, "if he has communicated them fully—most entirely, to me, what then, dear sir?"

"Why then, he has ordered you to tell them all to me."

"He has done so, but not yet—not until I hear from him."

"And must I be satisfied with this?"

"Yes, if you have confidence in me."

"Ha! Well well! Perhaps. But are you satisfied that I was right about Gordon's affection for you?" he asked.

"I have no doubts now; I can only wish that I may prove myself worthy of his love; and uncle," she murmured, bending over him, whilst her cheek hitherto so fair, so pale, crimsoned deeply, "I feel that I love him more truly than I had acknowledged to myself when you spoke of him. Our affection for each other can now never change."

"Ah, my Harriet, how many thousand lovers have thought and said that! How many who were never united, and cared not to be so!"

"That was because they had loved 'the poor, painted flourish of each other's fortune'—something that could change, not the

noble heart, not the immortal spirit—but uncle, dear, dear uncle, you did not yesterday so speak of lovers' constancy. You do not distrust, you cannot suspect Gordon of deceit or wrong?"

"Since I perceive that you cannot do so, I shall try to be of your mind. But it is difficult, very difficult for me, all concealments I dislike so much."

"There would have been no concealment, you would have been the first from whom he would have sought advice, had it not been that he felt his position with regard to you different after your assurance that you did not disapprove of his attachment to me; that attachment and your goodness made him afraid—too much afraid, perhaps, of losing your favour."

The conversation on this very interesting subject continued for some time. But whether Harriet was able quite to satisfy the colonel is doubtful; and that he in

some degree repented of his generous confidence in Gordon may be reasonably suspected.

He avoided the topic afterwards with her ; in discussing it however with Lady Anne, his remarks were not often in favour of his former views respecting his niece's happiness. One consequence of the matter was, that it was something for the husband and wife to talk of by themselves, to form conjectures about; and it gave a more confidential tone to their intercourse than had existed previously between them.

Though Colonel Aveley's health was not spoken of more hopefully by his medical attendants, Lady Anne insisted that it was better. He himself only felt that he was not progressing ; yet he must have reckoned that he had time before him, for his will still remained unmade. He thought of it often, so did Lady Anne ; but perhaps their thoughts were not very similar. Harriet

had never thought of it at all, except when her uncle spoke of it to her, and now he never did so, for which she was glad.

CHAPTER II.

“ Know ’twixt them and us there is no bond
Henceforward of allegiance, or of right—
’Tis circumstance—’tis power alone retains us.”

SCHILLER.

THE Indian intriguer, who was endeavouring to lead Asaph Hussein into a position which would place him in hostility to the British rule, found some difficulty with one so well versed as the Mogul was in the disheartening history of every attempt which had been made against it. Still there was in his mind an angry disdain respecting some proposals which had been made him by an

agent of the Company that was favourable to the views of the other. Colonel Aveley constantly suffering, and more and more withdrawn from public life, knew nothing of what was passing; gladly would the Muhammadan have made Gordon a medium of communication with the colonel, but now Gordon was not to be found—it was really true then, as he had said on the morning when they met in so strange a manner, that he was abandoning the army and going to seek some other mode of life. Asaph deeply regretted his abrupt separation from the young man; for, in reality, he had never felt a more sincere regard for him—a deeper interest in his welfare, than at that moment.

It is not to be supposed that his departure was altogether unnoticed among the less absorbing subjects of gossip of the community which he had so suddenly deserted. Nothing very satisfactory, however, was either guessed or said about it. Yet Colonel

Aveley's patronage of the young Scotchman, and his sanction of the intimacy which existed between Miss Aveley and him, had not passed without comment. The most natural conclusion, therefore, now was, that he had presumed so far as to aspire to her hand, forgetting what he had so lately been, and that he had received such a rebuff as had driven him to flight, thoroughly ashamed of himself.

This story, promulgated at first with the preface "I suppose," lost very soon those introductory words, and was related as a simple matter of fact. It became a complicated one in a short time, receiving as it rolled such additions as—how boldly Gordon made his declaration—how Miss Aveley was shocked by it—how Lady Anne fainted when she heard of it—how the colonel, in his anger, made an effort to spring up from his couch, which brought on violent spasms, and he had been much worse ever since. All

this served—nay, serves still—some “capital fellows” for an excellent joke about a soldier who made love to a colonel’s niece.

Now Asaph Hussein Khan, who did not at all come under the denomination of “a capital fellow,” and who joined in no gossip, was more puzzled than any of the loud talkers about the matter, and he could not be satisfied to remain in ignorance concerning the fate of one towards whom he had felt so strongly attracted. Besides, if Gordon had quarrelled with his patron and his friend, and had been abandoned by him, he might in such circumstances be won over to that from which he had before turned away. As the best means of obtaining information he determined to apply to Miss Aveley. He did not at all suspect the position in which she stood with regard to Gordon; he had, therefore, no hesitation respecting her feelings to cause in him any change from that frankness and earnestness of manner which

had always distinguished him in his intercourse with her, towards whom he felt a reverential regard, which she gratefully returned.

After some conversation with her on her uncle's health and on other topics, he said, "I have come to bid you farewell. It is most probable we shall never meet again."

Harriet expressed a natural regret on hearing these words, adding, "Then you will wish to see my uncle also?" "No," he replied, "I fear that in seeing him I might be led into explanations painful to us both—explanations useless now. If the colonel has had such cause of dissatisfaction with Mr. Gordon as has led to a breach between them, he must have lately only suffered too much in his feelings of friendship for me to add to his annoyances—and yet I could say something for that young man that would give pleasure to his patron; but if I tell you this I must tell you something of myself which I meant to conceal."

Harriet's blush—her look of eager interest on the mention of Gordon were not unobserved—were indeed truly interpreted by her quick discerning visitor ; but he seemed kindly unwilling to appear to scrutinise her feelings, and he abruptly went on, reminding her that she had once said that “War had become the traffic of the English in India.” “I smiled at your words,” he said. “I believed that I was only a looker-on in life, and that I was satisfied to be so. At length I too must begin to take a part in this traffic ; but—not with your people—against them—as their foe.”

“Can this be so ?” exclaimed Harriet, “Oh, do not say it ! My uncle, can he not get your cause of grievance removed, and make you our friend again ?”

“No ; it is too late. My honour to my brother is now pledged. Too long have I counselled a submissive policy—he can endure submission no longer.”

"But," interposed Harriet, "though your brother may be thwarted in his desire for uncontrolled sway in his territory, why should this make you abandon peaceful counsels—abandon us?"

"Because they are breaking their faith with him. He showed compassion to the fallen rajah—that was enough—and I have been insulted by the offer of my brother's seat. They would make me a double traitor, to my father's will and to the ties of brotherhood. They have discovered that I am the older, I should be the inheritor. What then; are there no ties among your people but those of gold and military hire?"

"Oh, you know," returned Harriet, "that it is not so, although we are so often misled by a policy which we have taught ourselves to believe necessary."

"Yes, yes! for I know your uncle; but he can no longer serve me. Let me then speak of Gordon, of whom I beg you to tell

me all you know." He then went on to relate to her what had passed on his last meeting with him, the offers which he had made him, and his refusal of them.

Harriet's cheeks glowed at all he said in praise of her lover; but when he added, that having separated himself from his patron there might now be reasons for Gordon's adopting different views, she shook her head and informed him that he had gone to Calcutta for the purpose of getting himself freed from his military bonds honourably, without wishing to involve Colonel Aveley's name in the matter."

"But this is no child's play," exclaimed the Mogul, "with which to amuse himself at fast and loose, as he pleases! He knows not the government there—he may rot in prison. Has he no friend there?"

Tremblingly she articulated, "I fear not."

"And you alone know of this plan of his?" he said, laying his hand softly on her

head, for he now fully understood how it was between them."

"I only," she replied.

"Children, children!" he repeated several times. Then, after a pause, "You have given me something more to think of than my own affairs. Do not speak of them to your uncle, it would only involve him in useless efforts too painful to him now; but let me know by what means I can communicate with Gordon. I shall dispatch a messenger on whom I can rely instantly. I know an Armenian merchant in Calcutta who will serve him for my sake."

Harriet expressed, more warmly than she might have done had she taken time to reflect, her gratitude for his desire to aid Gordon, and gave him the address on which they had decided for her letters. The impetuosity of Asaph's feelings on his brother's wrongs and his own subsided as he yielded to the interest which he felt for Miss Aveley

and the young soldier whom he had hoped to bind to himself. He listened to what she detailed of Gordon's plans with thoughtful attention, and in the end, re-assuring her by the hope that he should be able to serve him, he prepared to take his leave.

"We shall never meet again," he said, "and you will forget me—but never shall I forget you—farewell! My days of dreaming and hoping are over—in my declining years I must be that which I was forbidden to be in my youth—a man of action. May the good and generous Aveley never know to what I have been driven! Farewell! and God be with you!

CHAPTER III.

“Ambition swell, and thy proud sails to show,
Take all the winds that vanity can blow;
Wealth on a golden mountain blazing stand
And reach an India forth in either hand!

————— And shall the victor now,
Boast the proud laurels on his loaded brow?
Religion, O thou cherub, heavenly bright!
Thou, thou, art all; nor find I in the whole
Creation aught, but God and my own soul.”

YOUNG.

NOTWITHSTANDING all Lady Anne's assertions respecting her husband's condition, it is certain that life was becoming dimmer and dimmer to him. Like all the right-

hearted, as the last scene drew near, he cared less for the promptings of the understanding with its knowledge of life ; and he confided more in that higher reason which belongs to the instincts of the divine in our nature—belongs to faith and love.

Confiding fully in the affection of those who were dear to him, he ceased to think that important which had lately seemed so much so,—the disposal of his property, the making of his will. If he could have framed a testament which would have secured to his son on his death-bed “a conscience void of offence,” he would have summoned to his side scribe and lawyer to put his words in order and make them valid. But to all else he was indifferent, and repeated simply to his wife and Harriet his wishes for them and for the child. He trusted to their honour and attachment for doing all that was right ; and, inspired by Harriet’s confidence in Gordon, he trusted

in his honour and attachment also. He was happy ; glad, not to be disturbed by worldly matters any more.

“ Ay ?—why,” exclaims some bold captain of dragoons, “ he is not dying like a soldier who had won battles, had served his country well, and might have returned to it to be made a knight, or baronet, or some great thing or another ! ”

True, valiant captain ! He does not brave it out to the last ; and he has missed those honours which you name, and which are, alas ! unattainable in heaven.

But he has not missed even an earthly reward altogether. He has by his side two ministering friends, of that sex of which are made the best ministrants to sorrow, to sickness, and to the wounded spirit. One of them is subdued into softness, and forgetfulness of self and of vanity, by the awe of these last hours. The other, who has never known what vain and selfish thoughts are,

full of loving tenderness, whilst watching, praying, seems even in her grief for the sufferer, "to allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way."

Indeed, Harriet had a mournful pleasure in performing for her uncle those offices of love, which the sudden death of her father prevented in his case. Yes, so Providence decreed; the man of peace was snatched away suddenly at the last, as if struck by a ball on the field of battle; and the soldier, braving for years, marches and encounters, lay long on a bed of pain before death came. But during that time, how much was he soothed by her sweet companionship, and by the calmness of her piety. To her he clung longer than to aught else on earth; but at length, even from her he weaned his heart.

Dying not as the fool dieth, he knew that in the great act for which life is given, man is alone, and for this he prepared himself.

Alone, the spirit passes the boundary between time and eternity, whether the body sinks on the field of slaughter with thousands around, or on the sick couch, with mother, wife, and daughter bending near. Thus then, gathering up the strength of his soul to look steadily at death, he was perhaps, more intrepid than he who says, "It is a leap in the dark, I will take it blindfold!" Listening to the questioning within on that account which he might have to render of his deeds, he was perhaps, braver than he who by the din of the world, or the hum-drum of a priest stifles the cry of poor human nature tremblingly asking as the end draws near, What is it? What is this thing unknown? This which none can shun?

But the last act—the act alone, is accomplished. Aveley lies cold and stiff before his weeping wife—before the fatherless girl who had crossed seas and lands for the happiness of meeting eyes which would give

her once more a look of the old paternal care for her. Fully had she been understood,—and well repaid for her trust by his love.

Recalling afterwards, the only little cloud which had darkened her soul,—regret that he had married—she keenly reproached herself for it, as she clasped his child to her bosom, and remembered that to the marriage she owes that treasure—that dear object on which to bestow the affection she had given him. Only indeed in the smiles and sports of the prattler, unconscious of their grief, did the mourners find consolation. O generous nature! thy great aids to fortitude and virtue we neglect in our debasing fears and desires about life, and riches, and honours. But there comes to the royal, the noble, and the wealthy alike, a time when they must turn to thee for their comfort—when they can only find it in that which alleviates the sorrow of the peasant and the

beggar, the joy of family ties; the love of
our kind; the sense of social sympathy.

CHAPTER IV.

“Upon my heart thy accents sweet,
Of peace and pity fell like dew
On flowers half dead; thy lips did meet
Mine tremblingly; thy dark eyes threw
Their soft persuasion on my brain,
Charming away its dream of pain.

We are not happy, sweet! our state
Is strange, and full of doubt and fear;
More need of words that ills abate;
Reserve or censure come not near
Our sacred friendship, let there be
No solace left for thee and me.”

SHELLEY.

WITH the heavenly influences which make
the house of mourning better than the house

of feasting, the solemn parade of the stately funeral, and the set speech of condolence from the formal visitor, were, alas! much at variance. But all must be gone through; and, having the boy to cheer them, and enable them to bear up against their sadness, Lady Anne and Miss Aveley sustained their melancholy parts with patience and dignity.

The martial pomp of the interment was not a heartless show, a mere ceremonial due to rank in which the memory of the man went for nothing. Colonel Aveley had been loved and respected in no common degree, and the sincere regret of his military friends followed him to the grave. He had made India his country, his home, more than most Englishmen do; and, in the district over the interests of which he presided, he had acquired a strong hold on the affection of the people. Thus there sorrowed for him those who felt his loss more deeply than his companions of the camp and the mess felt it,—these were

the poor and the oppressed, whose cause he upheld.

And now, all is over!—the funeral array—the long procession—the muffled drum—the discharge of musketry—the slow roll of cannon—all is over! The visits of condolence of the high personages of the place have been paid to the two mourners, and each of them sits alone. Each is given up to solemn thought on what is past, and on what is now to be undertaken. There lies before them the long journey to Calcutta, and the long voyage to England.

“To England!” Lady Anne repeats, and starts as one might from a dream. Had not, indeed, all that had passed in the last few years been a dream? she asked herself;—or, if it were not so, had she not ended a life, and was she not entering on a new one? Yes; she felt this in her inmost soul.

She left England, determined to accomplish abroad what she could not at home—

marriage ; to accomplish that which she had taught herself to believe absolutely necessary for the completion of a woman's existence. Solely occupied by her own selfish views, her determination to be agreeable to Colonel Aveley was such that she won him to make the offer of his hand ; and she united herself to him, utterly ignorant of, and indifferent to, the excellence of his character. In truth, the generosity and nobleness of his nature were only revealed to her whilst she was endeavouring to secure the whole of his fortune to herself and her child, by preventing him from making a will.

Full of trust and honour, he had believed a will useless. He was gone. All was hers and the child's ; and now she bent down her head in silence, as she sat alone in her chamber. She felt as if the spirit that had so lately entered into eternity had acquired some of the attributes of the Eternal, and could read the thoughts of man's heart—as

if all her meanness was now known to him from whom she had hidden it so well. Long and bitterly she wept, on gaining that which she had persuaded herself would make her happy.

And Harriet, also alone in her chamber, were her tears bitter? Oh, no!—pious, consoling, hopeful, were they.

And were her thoughts of return to England?—No; she thought only of Calcutta, and of the friend whom she should meet there, to whom she had already dispatched a letter with the announcement of her uncle's death, and of her intended departure for that city.

And now, dwelling on this, she felt that her present sorrow left her not desolate, as her former one had done, until the good John Hardy opened his arms to her. Her heart was bound to another heart—her spirit united to the destiny of another spirit—her soul existed in another soul—neither coul

ever again, she knew, have a separate life, however long they might be sundered.

With a solemn sense of the great happiness meant for us creatures of this world, would we but receive it, she stepped out on the terraco. Grateful "to the hand unseen which led her safe," she raised her eyes to the splendours of the night, and remained for some minutes lost in prayer. Wrapt, forgetting earth, it seemed to her almost, that among the disembodied, she was a witness to the re-union of the brothers—her father and uncle; and she remained entranced until a little cry from the house brought her back to the world.

It was the voice of the child, disturbed in his sleep for a moment, and again all was silence. But not again did her thoughts return to the skies. This slight call was powerful in its effect. Not love, not even zeal for religion, should claim her, she felt, from the duty she owed that little one.

Fervently she there devoted herself to the care of him, in as far as might be permitted by his nearer relative.

Then other tender recollections following, she gazed, not on the heavens, not above, but on the scene below her, with tender eyes. There lay the garden in which she had often walked with Gordon—and there was the spot on which she saw him last. Where was he now? Had he been able to remain in Calcutta? Should she see him there? Should she on his bosom pour out the full remembrance of her uncle's love and goodness? Should she in return hear from his lips his mingled sorrow and admiration? What might they decide on when they met? Would India be their home, or, separating, must they look forward to meet again in England?

Ah, she could answer none of these questions! But this she had learnt, as well as Gordon, "we do but row, we're steered by

fate." We must row well, however, our best—no evading of the labour !

Full of the pious resolve to do her part, she retired to rest calm and submissive; and after she had laid her head on the pillow, Lady Anne, coming into her room to enquire whether all her preparations for departure on the next day were made, was so struck by the lovely serenity of her face, that she gazed on her unable to speak whilst her tears fell fast. Indeed, no greater contrast could have been presented than that of her own grief-worn and conscience-stricken lineaments, to the tranquility of Harriet's beauty.

"Dearest aunt," said she, starting up as soon as she was aware who was near her, "Dearest aunt, do not give way thus. Let me go with you? Let me pass the night in your room? You will be unfit for your journey, I fear, to-morrow."

Lady Anne, drying her tears, said softly,

"You looked so pale, and with your eyes closed—so like *him*—like him when at rest from all his pain—I was overcome on seeing you thus."

"Oh, if you can think me like him, love me!—love me for his sake!"

"I will—I do, my dear," she replied, stooping to embrace her, "Do not leave your bed; I only came to know whether all your preparations were made."

"They are, thank you; I shall be ready. But may I not go with you now?"

"No, no! Good night, my love!"

It was the first time she had said "my love" to Harriet, and she slept soundly under the influence of this new affection vouchsafed her, when another had been withdrawn.

In the morning, quiet, useful, active, she did much to aid in accomplishing the sad departure, without what might have been painful to the feelings, and without tumult

Once more she is in the palanquin, and borne rapidly forward ; and now meditation may have full sway in the long monotonous journey. But not now is she a solitary or neglected traveller. Everything was ordered by the friends of the deceased to shew respect for his widow and family ; their train is therefore numerous, almost princely. With elephants, camels, horses, men, their progress may be swift ; and with tents and many luxurious means of repose, their halts sufficiently agreeable. They are in safety—I follow them, then, no further.

CHAPTER V.

"We have to report a return of activity and large speculative business. Transactions are on a large scale; the same confident tone to which we adverted is kept up; and a strong demand exists both in the trade and on speculation. This morning there is a good deal of stir and activity, quite sufficient to keep us moving on in the same direction."

Liverpool Paper.

To those who felt for my friend Benjamin Hardy under the depressing circumstances in which he was left, the above announcement will be agreeable. He was largely benefiting—indeed had already largely benefited—by the kind of reaction which followed,

as is usual, an unfortunate commercial crisis. He knew now, by personal experience, what are the results to individuals of those periodical *cataclysms* in the mercantile universe, of which he had at one time only read and heard. And what was the consequence of his knowledge? This—that far from caring about discovering where the blame lay; far from seeking out the cause of the evil, and how it might be rectified, he never thought of such matters, was quite indifferent to them.

His sole duty he now found was to rectify the evil which had befallen himself, the cause of which was but too well known to him. To his duty then he set himself, not with the cold deliberate purpose of his former industry, but with heart and soul; and the upward movement in the commonwealth of traffic seconded his efforts infinitely beyond what might have been anticipated. He had in truth renewed the task of making

a fortune, his mind disturbed at intervals by the most disheartening fears that he should not accomplish his work in due time. But he had erred in his distrust. Dwelling too much on his own griefs he had not looked abroad on public matters, otherwise he would even then have been more hopeful.

Let it not be imagined, however, that this was precisely one of those periods in which the success of speculations, realising marvellous riches in a day, resembles more the strokes of fairy-art or of magic than aught else. It was not a time when a man, learning that he has acquired a fortune of many thousand pounds, of which twenty-four hours before he dared only dream, mounts a horse and gallops to his country-house, determined to ride up its narrow stairs—it is discovered that his good fortune has made him mad, and he passes the rest of his life in a lunatic asylum; or when another, having in the same way obtained “riches fineless,” goes

home in his joy, and, not knowing what else to do, cuts his throat.

Ay, in this wisest of nations, men have done such things! But what then? The god we worship, if not the true one, will have his sacrifices—our idols are always inexorable.

This then not being the period of fortune-making by enchantment, our hero is not to be depicted as rolling in wealth on a sudden—as experiencing that greatest of trials after his losses and his poverty. No. He had done well, very well, in the true business acceptation of the phrase, but he was living just as he lived when I left him, that I might follow the career of Harriet and Gordon—living humbly and reclusely in his apartments in the house of Mrs. Bismark.

He had had thoughts during his time of partnership of changing his abode for one in another street, marking an advance in the scale of gentility. Happily he had never

done so; and the slight tendency to the home-like adherence, which even his dull old first lodging awakened through habit, became a much stronger feeling under the roof of the poor clerk's widow. On her side she regarded him as so desirable a lodger that she would have kept him on half the terms she charged any other. Her knowledge of the unfortunate issue of his first mercantile connexion, made her but more scrupulously attentive to his comforts—wishes, with regard to himself, he seemed to have no longer, and therefore her disinterested care for him deserves the higher praise.

Yet, perhaps, in another point of view, she was not disinterested in her desire to attach Mr. Hardy to her house. It pleased her to think that his correct habits, his industry, his spirit under so severe a trial as that which he had lately experienced, made him a fine example to be held up to her

boys. For me, I hold that, although she was a woman, they might have found the example which they needed in her own conduct. It is to be hoped they did so—at all events, as they grew up they were anxious to lighten her burdens; her hard and grinding poverty seemed destined to pass away, and a better lot to be reserved for her age.

Benjamin, in spite of the humbling of misfortune, still presented himself on 'Change with that self-respecting severity of demeanour, which had formerly caused him to be looked on as proud. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that his calamity had rather added to the sternness, or pride of his bearing. It is quite certain that from some cause he was a noticeable man. His letters to his correspondents, remarkable for their directness of purpose and their laconic brevity, began to be spoken of. Indeed, a sheet containing only an address; the word "buy," or "sell" (as the case might

be), and his sign-manual, might almost be said to rival the retort of the Lacedemonian —“Come and take them,” when bidden to give up his arms; and the Spartan spirit which my friend was shewing deserves commendation. Whether, it was a Christian spirit, is much to be doubted.

CHAPTER VI.

“I studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
For their own good, and did by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind.
In friendships I have been most fortunate,
Yet never saw I one whom I would call
More willingly my friend.”

SHELLEY.

THE poetical justice which had pleased Benjamin when he decided on living with Mrs. Bismark, was about to receive a further confirmation at this time. He had taken her eldest son into his office, and, having affairs to wind up in the West Indies, chose him to

manage them for him. As this youth stood before him listening to some last orders respecting what he was to do in Jamaica something passed suddenly through my friend's mind in which the fancy about poetical justice was forgotten. Another subject thrust itself before him, and he ended abruptly, saying, "I need not say more at present, as I can this evening, at your mother's, give you farther instructions."

And what are his reflections on that evening as he walks home to his lodgings?

That although his friend, the Jamaica captain, said, on his return from his voyage, he had done all that could be done to discover the unfortunate widow and son of Sir Walcot Downes, he had not done enough. That he was a mere sailor, careless, not well acquainted with the best means of making enquiries. That they might be more successful if persevered in by such an intelligent lad as young Bismark.

Thus then, after such explanation and elucidation of business matters as he had once listened to from the head of the great house which he served, when the youth said, "I suppose, Mr. Hardy, that is all?" he made no reply for some minutes.

At last he slowly broke the silence with "Yes—about business—but—I have something else to say!"

Another pause of abstraction. Then, starting and turning suddenly a searching look on the expectant young man, who sat with downcast eyes, he said, "I see that you await from me, on your setting out alone in life, a little of what people call good advice on moral conduct. No—I am not going to talk to you in that way. If excellent counsels could have made a man virtuous, I should have been so—the best were given me—but morality cannot be handed thus from one man to another, virtue would not then be what it has pleased God it only shall

be—a victory over the evil within. I advise you to be religious, that is all. What I mean to speak of is another affair—it concerns a friend of mine.”

Here he related the story of Eugenia, as far as it was necessary to be made known—gave the information which he had received from Gordon, and told the fruitless result of the Jamaica captain’s enquiries. He professed so warm an interest in the lady, so strong a desire to see justice done her, that Bismark entered heart and soul into the matter. Hardy was pleased; he felt certain that he had secured a zealous assistant, one less likely to be satisfied with a careless “I don’t know,” or “I have forgotten,” than he persuaded himself his former enquirer had been.

Everything that seemed necessary was said; there was again a pause, and then the youth rose to go, with “I shall now bid you good-bye, sir.”

"No, no," returned Hardy quickly, "I shall see you again in the morning, though if the wind continue as it is, you will sail early, but your mother will be happier if I see you off myself."

"Thank you—thank you, sir ; I shall tell her what you say, that she may set her mind at ease about me," and he went to find her.

Descending the stairs, he said to himself, "Mr. Hardy speaks strangely sometimes ; one would almost think that he had not been quite a good man."

This idea he communicated to his mother, who was much shocked at it. In reproving him for entertaining such a suspicion of one whose excellence they had known for so long a time, she reminded him that the best men are the most humble, and the least sure that they have done right.

"I don't believe, mother," he replied, "that good men, though they may be

humble, are not sure whether they are doing right or not."

"Ah, my dear lad, how will you make yourself sure that you are always in the right?"

"I think by making myself sure that my wishes are right first."

"And Mr. Hardy," she rejoined, "must have been pretty sure of his, for you see how he acts now. But take his advice, and be religious." Here the good woman enlarged much on going to church regularly.

In the meantime, Hardy, alone in his room, reproached himself for his bald and business-like way of putting off the responsibility of all moral guidance of the widow's son. It is true, his own life, disappointing him in himself as well as in the world, had made him think almost scornfully, that morality was not a thing to be passed, as he said, from man to man. Not the result of the experience of one to be given to ano-

ther, and so become practical with much good effect. He had, then, learnt to rely much more on the authoritative teaching of religion, than he had been at first disposed to do. But that for which he upbraided himself most justly, was that he had been altogether wanting in sympathy—his heart whispered to him that, in the expression of fellow-feeling, we are giving the best moral aid to our fellow-beings. How was it, indeed, that he had not felt more for one departing alone on a first voyage, as he had himself once departed?

It was strange—it was not right. “To-morrow morning, when I see him, I shall speak differently to him,” he said to himself.

But on the morrow, which is the first day of our casting off an old, bad habit of self-absorbed reserve, we do not wear our new garment *open at the bosom* very gracefully. Indeed it is singular what revolutions may take place in our whole internal being, yet

the external remain unchanged. The mould in which in early life we permitted it to be cast, or into which we ourselves forced it, will not yield to us. It is a pity that it should be so ; it is a fault which belongs to the want of the gracious and the graceful in our nature.

CHAPTER VII.

“Injured, hopeless, faint and weary,
Sad, indignant, and forlorn,
Through the desert, wild and dreary,
Hagar leads the child of scorn.

* * * *

“O’er thy empty pitcher mourning,
’Mid the desert of the world;
Thus with shame and anguish burning,
From thy cherished pleasures hurled.

See! thy Great Deliverer nigh,
Calls thee from thy sorrow vain,
Bids thee on his love rely,
Bless the salutary pain.”

TIGHE.

I SAID that Benjamin Hardy was “doing well—” and in more than the business

meaning of the term was it applicable to him.

He had not seized on his first gains that he might speculate more largely, and so leap at once to fortune. He went on as he began, moderately ; he lived as before, plainly, reclusely—but he had seized on his first gains. They were employed in paying his uncle's creditors, that he might have the new house restored to him. Who can tell with what sentiments of admiration John Hardy now regarded Benjamin ? Never was esteem carried to a higher pitch ! In his generosity and humility he forgot that he had any claim on his nephew—that he had ever helped him, that through him he had lost his own well-earned wealth.

He talked more than he had ever done before, warming into fluency in his praise of the young man, and he found at his hearth some very good listeners. To that hearth, in the evenings, he contrived to draw, as

often as possible, the French lady, who has been named as his fellow lodger at Will Diggins, the gardener's. Then there was Madame Lenoir's son—and old Mary, his former housekeeper—and Will himself, with Kitty his wife, and their baby. It must be confessed that these last were not the best of listeners. The baby for reasons of its own—Kitty from making many interruptions, by asking questions—and Will, because he could never refrain from grumbling that his master's money had been lost at all, and that he had been so long without seeing what had been done in the gardens at the new house.

Old Mary was a good listener; but the best of the listeners were Madame Lenoir and her boy. They heard all that the good old man said concerning his nephew; they were interested in it all,—one saw that in their eyes—but they never interrupted him, they never spoke. Sometimes a smile, sweet, yet sad, lingered on the lips of the widow for a

few moments ; sometimes her long eyelashes were wet with tears ; and sometimes young Lenoir, “addressed himself to motion as if about to speak,” but restraining himself, on a glance from his mother, remained silent.

John Hardy’s long theme was—how well Benjamin had always acted ; so independent from the first. Sent to the West Indies by great merchants and giving so much satisfaction—beginning business and being taken in by a rascal, as any open hearted, unsuspecting lad might have been,—losing everything, but bearing his misfortunes so nobly—and now generously thinking only of making an old fellow like him, comfortable. This was his long theme on which he was so fluent—but it had to come to an end.

There was another subject which soon occupied all his thoughts—Miss Aveley’s return. She had written about the Colonel’s illness. If her uncle died, he said to himself, she would surely again be his—would

return to England—to the village which she loved for her father's sake? And now that he might go back to the new house, he became all impatience to be there. Who knew how soon she might be with them? It was important to have the rooms well aired and warmed. Christmas was approaching—he might as well be in his new abode again, before that time, and give it the benefit of the good fires. Perhaps, indeed, Benjamin might come to spend Christmas with him. He threw out these hints—and they were effectual in stirring up Mary, Kitty, and Will to unwearied efforts in scouring, cleaning, polishing, and arranging.

But there was yet something in his heart and head which had not been told. Yes, whilst Benjamin, in Liverpool, looked so strangely sombre as he gave his directions to the youth going to Jamaica, his uncle was contemplating the re-settling of things in the new house, and he looked thoughtful,


yet pleasantly thoughtful. Benjamin might come to spend the Christmas?—"I do not care much whether he does or not," he said to himself, "I had rather not have him I think until the spring, when *she* will be here—he is such a man of business that he will be as pleased if I tell him to work hard and not come till then. If he goes on as he has begun, three years more will give him, with what I am now making for her, a very pretty independence—and then, if I am but spared to see them happy——"

Ah, John Hardy! dear John! honest dreamer! loving schemer! But when, since Adam's first sleep were the dreams of an honest loving heart fulfilled, though the schemes of many a roguish head have been accomplished? Cease to plan, for cruel disappointment is near!

He does not plan for Harriet and for Benjamin only; he has not so narrow a heart that it can admit only them. The whole

household at Kitty's were very dear to him, but dearest of all were Madame Lenoir and her boy. And now, I fear I must allow my good old friend to appear rather capricious. His house was ready for him, the brightest of fires burning on its hearths, and yet, from day to day he deferred his return to it. The longer he thought of leaving these two favorites, the more impossible it seemed for him to do so ; and at last, he was so lucky as to hit upon the notion that it would be quite wrong. The young widow was just the sort of companion whom Miss Aveley would like ; and if he could, until the time came for his resigning the house to her and Benjamin, fix the poor mother and child with him, he should then have an excellent reason for making them ever after a permanent home in some other place.

Full of these ideas, when old Mary, for the twentieth time told him that all was ready in his house, not a thing, a book, a



paper, out of its place, he said boldly that he could not return to be alone there, and that unless Madame Lenoir would go with him, and stay until after Christmas, old Mary might live in the house by herself. The widow laughed at this—but the others joined in entreating her to do what Mr. Hardy wished ; and her son, like all children, fond of change, begged so importunately that she would consent, that at length she yielded.

Once more then, as I in the fast darkening winter evenings took my walk over the hill, I could pause with pleasure before John Hardy's gate. I saw the bright flickering of the fire in his parlour, its light being now and then crossed by the slight graceful form of the foreigner ; and I heard the joyous tones of young Lenoir laughing at some of his own pranks—all seemed happiness.

But Christmas was drawing near, and Benjamin had written that perhaps he should

come. In spite of the notion about putting him off till the spring, his uncle found that he really loved him too well to be able to refuse himself the happiness of seeing him ; and he decided in his own mind that Benjamin could come both then and in the spring.

Immediately afterwards, Madame Lenoir became most anxious to return to Kitty's ; she declared positively that she would spend the Christmas there, and showed an inflexibility of which no one could have thought her capable. On the eve of the day which she had fixed for leaving, when her boy had retired to rest, and she sat alone with her host, he could not help telling her how much he was hurt by her refusal to remain with him. He had hoped, he said, that she would be so happy with him when Miss Aveley returned, and he was on the point of adding how different her proud independence was from the sweet humility of his darling, but he checked himself. His natural

refinement of feeling prompted that there would be unkindness in the comparison. He was glad he had not made it, and reproached himself for what he had said, when he saw the widow, usually so composed, give way to tears; then, drawing close to him, she sank down beside him, bowed her forehead on his knees, and covered her streaming eyes with her hands.

He tried to raise her up, saying, "forgive me, my dear, forgive me—I did not mean—"

"Oh, Mr. Hardy!" she exclaimed, "do not speak so—you cut me to the heart—I am a worthless wretch—I ought not to be under your roof—ought not to be named as fit to be the companion of her whom you love—who is so worthy of your love."

He knew not what to say. But now, she raised her head; she looked up despairingly but firmly in his face, and poured out for the first time to a mortal ear her story of error, of crime, of sorrow, of penitence—Eugenia

Fanshawe's story—for it was she who knelt at John Hardy's feet.

She still knelt, long after her sad history had ended ; but she was not bowed down—he had raised her up, had one arm round her, and she wept softly on his bosom. Happy confession ! Half the burden of her heavy life was removed from her. And he, who thought always of his own sorrows last, he saw not at that moment, his fair dream for Harriet and Benjamin, swept away like a radiant cloud before the rude breath of winter's wind—No !—his own grief last for Benjamin's fall, for the conviction forced upon him, that he never had been worthy of Harriet ; Eugenia's tears must first be dried, then, the old man might weep.

Kitty once said that he was not much of a church-goer ; that was true—but she should have added, that there was not a man in England better acquainted with the scriptures. He stretched out his hand to a

Bible that lay beside him, and opening it, pointed to certain verses ; Eugenia read.

“Woman, where are those thine accusers ?
Hath no man condemned thee ?

“She said, no man Lord.

“And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee ; go, and sin no more.”

CHAPTER VIII.

"He is the best reformer of his mind who has at once broken the chains which debased his heart, and has repented."

BACON.

LET Christmas go by unheeded ! When the heart keeps no holiday, holiday times are but wearisome. In the village when Christmas came there were some minds too much disturbed for enjoyment.

Eugenia did not leave John Hardy ; Benjamin did not come. He was desired to defer his visit until the spring, and was told that Miss Aveley was then expected. His

uncle had not intended naming this at first ; he had pleased himself with the fancy of a delightful surprise—but now—all was so changed—ah, so changed !

If Eugenia, on the night of her confession, prayed even more humbly, yet more gratefully, if she slept more peacefully than she had done for years, who shall tell with what bitter sorrow John Hardy's prayers were made, and how long sleep was banished from his pillow by regret for deluded hopes ? Unperverted by the sophistry of passion, he saw as clearly as the penitent the greatness of her guilt ; and there had been a moment whilst he listened to her when *the man*, fearing God and loving virtue, would have repulsed her—but the *Christian* triumphed—he drew her to his bosom—he heard her out. Heard of Mr. Fanshawe's ruin ; of her noble struggle to support him, herself, and child ; of Benjamin's abandonment of them ; of the two hundred pounds returned to him.

And here his tender heart was wrung with pity—his sympathy was all with her, and indignation swelled his breast against Benjamin, for the sophistry of cold-blooded selfishness had as little power over him as that of passion. But he knew not how much the desperate effort to adhere to the selfish side, for the world's sake, had cost his nephew, let him therefore be pardoned if his thoughts of him were almost too hard. Time, however, softened these first painful impressions, and Eugenia seconded the work of time. She spoke as every woman speaks of the man whom she has loved with truth and passion, when she dares at all to speak of him. The guilt, the shame, the degradation, were hers—hers alone—she said. Her punishment was too justly merited. Oh, that it could have come from some other hand! And yet that could not have been—only through that hand could she have felt her crime. No! All was right, all just, all

merciful now—only let not *him* be condemned.

John Hardy shook his head. He could not but condemn, though he did so more gently than before.

But after this there came into his mind a thought which he could not help communicating to her; for, now that the restraint between them was removed, she shewed her artless and childlike nature so truly that it was impossible not to be entirely open with her. She had loved, she loved still, she had proved her repentance to be so sincere, had acted so admirably towards her child, where, he asked himself, could Benjamin find a worthier wife? What fitter amends than marriage for the grief which he had caused her? On this subject he determined to speak to her before entering on another very important to her.

He did speak—and great was his surprise to find that she rejected such an idea as one

not to be entertained for a moment. She did not tell the kind old man what she felt—perhaps, indeed, she could not have found words to do so—but her simple sense of right, awakened and strengthened by sorrow, made her turn with alarm from what seemed a palliative of her guilt. She would not have her conscience speak to her of that guilt otherwise than it then did. No! Let the gilded duchess forget, in the title she has won, that she was once but the accomplished paramour of her husband!—let the world which so gladly receives her persuade her to that forgetfulness! Honest penitence does not forget the time of sin—seeks not what may bring forgetfulness. Such was Eugenia's state of mind—a good state, attained through severe discipline.


Finding her fixed in her resolve not to permit Benjamin, at any future time, to be solicited to a renewal of his affection for her, John Hardy next spoke on the matter of her

son's claims to the Downes estates; and here legal counsel was needed. Of course the old man gave the lawyer no reason for his being so much interested in the young widow. None was necessary for any one in the village; the excellence of his nature and the benevolence of his heart were known to all, and that she required a friend was information sufficient.

Eugenia, after her father's death, discovered among his papers the address of her husband, and then, for the first time knew that he was a baronet. Mr. Fanshawe's information respecting him having been limited to the announcement that he was a scoundrel, and not worth speaking about. Of course, so painful a subject had never been voluntarily alluded to by her, and thus she was aware of nothing but what it pleased her father to communicate. Finding herself in great distress, she thought it right for her child's sake, to apply to Sir Walcot Downes,

and she had done so—ineffectually, it appeared to her—yet not quite ineffectually as his dying declaration to Gordon showed. Having however, received no answer to her letter, and becoming hopeless about it, she embraced an opportunity which unexpectedly presented itself of accompanying a French lady to Guadaloupe. Assisted by this lady, she there supported herself and child with more ease than she had been able to do in Jamaica, where she shrank from the aid of those who had known Mr. Fanshawe in his days of prosperity ; they being men of his own stamp, kind-hearted, but careless, almost licentious, in all matters concerning women.

Whilst in Guadaloupe she acquired a knowledge of the French language, and eventually she embarked for Europe, in a vessel bound to Havre. There she remained but a very short time, lest she should expend the little sum which she had brought



with her from the West Indies, before accomplishing her object of reaching our village.

There, what discoveries awaited her! that this village had been the residence of her lover Hardy!—that she had made her home in the house with his uncle! Struck by these strange coincidences, and flung back upon old and painful remembrances, she lost courage—she determined to remain unknown. She had again recourse to her needle; but she had also another means of adding to her little gains, that of giving lessons in French. There was a good school in the village, to which she sent her boy; and thus, satisfied about what was most important to her, his education, she decided on doing nothing further unless compelled by necessity. In the meantime she trusted to secure for him some friends, who would make his claims good, in the event of her death.

She acted in this way, no less from strong feelings of humiliation arising out of her own peculiar position, than from womanly timidity about what seemed to her an affair full of difficulties. She had heard from her father many things in condemnation of lawyers—many of those unjust and absurd things which one fool utters and another repeats, and so they gain currency; and she was naturally afraid about her son's case. Our excellent legal friend in the village saw no difficulty in it, after she laid before him the documentary evidence of her marriage with Sir Walcot Downes. But as the estate was in the hands of certain persons for the payment of his debts, which were yet only liquidated in part, he counselled delay.

With this she was well pleased, for she was convinced that her boy was better as he then was, than he could be as the reputed heir to a title and to large estates. Alas! remembering his father, she had but too

real grounds for this conviction. Eugene, for so she now called him, was much improved by having been the sharer in her discipline. The habits of thoughtfulness and self-restraint, to which he had been used in preserving the secret of their name, and more particularly, latterly, of their acquaintance with young Mr. Hardy, had been advantageous to him; and she desired, for the present, nothing better than that he should continue as he was.

CHAPTER IX.

“When I would pray and think, I think and pray
To several subjects: the state whereon I studied
Is like a good thing, being often read,
Grown feared and tedious.”

SHAKESPEARE.

BUT there are others in our little community, of whom we have thought at Christmas. Eugenia and John Hardy were not the only ones whose minds were a little disturbed by previous occurrences at that joyous period. The Marquis and Marchioness of Hoodborough are again at Downes House; Lady Charlotte, the Earl

and Viscount, after having been absent from the castle, returned to it just before Christmas. Assuredly the earl and viscount are not agitated, unless it be by emotions of pleasure, on finding themselves again at their ease in their own home. And assuredly the cold unmoved exterior of Lady Hoodborough, and the refined suavity of Lady Charlotte, give no indication of disturbance as yet.

Look again into the drawing-room at Woreham Castle. It is not the tedious half-hour before dinner, but the genial half-hour before retiring to rest. The brother and sister are standing on the hearth-rug. Lady Charlotte's countenance is peculiarly gay and attractive; her mind is filled with the remembrance of certain passages between her and an elderly wealthy baronet whom she had met lately. She was thinking that two friends, masculine and feminine, with good taste, good manners, good fortune

and good position, might be almost as happy in their union as two lovers. Then she began to think of a Lady Mary whom they had met also, so desirable a person for Lord Woreham—young, lovely, accomplished, fit indeed to banish for ever from his mind the foolish fancy for Hester Downes, who had again—and neyer more boldly—renewed her flirtation with him.

Lady Charlotte had just laid her hand on Lord Woreham's arm, to detain him whilst she gave him some advice respecting Lady Mary, concerning which to take counsel on his pillow, when she was interrupted by the entrance of a footman with a note for her.

"Does any one wait?" she asked, surprised at receiving a note at that hour.

"No, my lady. The Marquis of Hoodborough's valet brought it, and, hearing there was company, desired me not to give it you, my lady, till you were disengaged."

"I suppose it is from poor Lady Hood-

borough to say how they are?" remarked Lord Woreham, "they are both now sad invalids—what a blessing health is?"

But his sister did not hear him—the note seemed deeply interesting. After a pause he asked in a louder key, "how are Lord and Lady Hoodborough, Charlotte, are they better?"

"No," replied she, folding up the note slowly. She was apparently too much moved by its contents to carry out her little plan as she had intended for her brother's guidance again into marriage. There was a tremor in her voice as she said, "Lord Hoodborough, I fear, is worse. He thinks himself he cannot recover."

"Dear me! It is very distressing," returned the earl. "He is not much above forty—at least, is far from fifty."

She was silent, so was he for some minutes. Then he looked at his watch—observed that it was late, and retired for the night. She

remained standing where he left her for a considerable time lost in thought ; at last, large tears began to steal down her cheeks. The note was from the marquis—he was ill—dying perhaps—and, who would have ministered to him in his hours of suffering, as she would have done ? she sadly asked.

Yes, such is woman's constancy, when once she has truly loved, that at that moment Lady Charlotte reproached herself for having dwelt with complacency on the attentions of the baronet, of whom she had been thinking. What will the world and circumstances make of this heart with its honest instincts ? Little, very little. But religion—not our curate's religion, nor Eliza Downes's, but John Hardy's religion, might make it invaluable as his own.

On the following morning at a very early hour, Lady Charlotte despatched a note in reply to Lord Hoodborough's ; and then, much sooner than she generally visited her

friend the marchioness, she called at Downes House. Weston, her ladyship's maid was always summoned to give the visitor some account of her lady's state of health and spirits before she entered her apartment. On the present occasion, after telling how Lady Hoodborough had passed the night, she added, "My lady's physician is just with her."

"In that case," replied Lady Charlotte, "I cannot see her yet—but should like to see Lord Hoodborough, if that be possible. Have the kindness to send his valet to me, and when Lady Hoodborough is disengaged, you can let her know that I am with his lordship."

Mrs. Weston retired, and immediately after Mr. Hornby, the valet, a respectable and important looking man, made his appearance. In reply to Lady Charlotte's enquiries, he said that the marquis had had a tolerably good night, and was then on a

couch in his dressing-room, then he announced her in a low voice suited to a sick man's ear, and departed noiselessly closing the door.

Lady Charlotte had not seen the marquis for many weeks, and she was much shocked by the change which in the time had been wrought in his fine face and form. Violent pain, disease, and weariness of the dull round of day and night in his chamber, unlighted by any look, uncheered by any whisper of love, had made him suddenly an old man. Her bosom was too full of compassion when she saw his condition, for her to ask, "Was it not just that the ills of the lonely-hearted should thus be requited unto him?"

With unaffected tenderness and with tearful eyes, she put her hand into his as she bent over his couch, and asked him softly how he felt. He was weak from long illness, and the "hysterica passio" seemed for a

minute about to master him, so much was he touched by the sincerity of that kindness which he deserved so little. He could not speak, but he pressed her hand to his lips, and he would not relinquish it when she had taken her seat close to the pillow of his couch.

At length a faint smile hung over his features, and he said "Do not look so despondingly on me—I have been wretchedly, terribly ill, but I am really better—shall I confess it? I made the very worst of my state in my note to you, in order to win you to see me."

"That was scarcely fair and honourable," she answered.

"Oh, yes!—and you yourself will think it quite so, when you know how much good you can do me—nay, how much you have already done me. I feel that I may indulge the hope which I have been trying to renew within me, that there is something worth

living for—if these doctors can but make me live.”

“O, Lord Hoodborough,” exclaimed she, “if you do not find in life that which should make it valuable, who can do so?”

“I know not who,” he replied, “for I would not take the fortunes of men beneath me, and I look on none as above me—yet my last years have been such, that if the future are to be similar, I may well hold life to be of no price, no worth.”

“But these ideas are the result of your debility, the body acting on the mind—you have acknowledged that you made the worst of your state to draw me here—now if you try to draw on my pity any further, by your low spirits, I shall run away at once,” said she in a more lively tone.

“No—you must not do so until you have heard a long tale from me—and since you have been so good to me in acceding to my wishes, I shall proceed to it without loss of

time. It is quite certain, my dear Lady Charlotte, I have been so near the gates of death that I was counselled to make my will. What does it matter? said I to my advisers, the physicians—what with deeds and documents of all kinds made by my father, and marriage settlements made by myself, there is little for me to do now—two or three lines will be sufficient—I can soon dictate them. ‘Do not be in a hurry, my lord,’ was the doctors’ reply, ‘but we thought it our duty—’ and so forth, and they left me. And, do you know since then, I think I have been getting better.” At this point he laughed, but his listener seemed little disposed to join in his mirth—there was something of the *hysterica passio* also in it.

“The doctors left me—I did not laugh then—I began to think about the deeds, and documents, and settlements—and to ask myself whether there might not be some

claims on me with regard to the disposal of my property. I soon after made Hornby bring to my bedside a great box of family papers—there were in it many letters which I had never looked over. But, Lady Charlotte, before I go on, let me ask you one question—Have you heard lately from Lady Anne?”

At this moment, Lady Charlotte dropped her handkerchief, and had to liberate her hand from the marquis's to pick it up, he being unable to do that for her. Now, I may here just observe, that in the increased intimacy between her and the marchioness, the latter had imparted to her the strange suspicions which she had formed respecting the relationship of Miss Aveley to her husband, and had altogether abandoned her theory about likenesses when there were no ties of blood. To this theory Lady Charlotte was disposed to adhere; she said the resemblance existing between Miss Aveley

and the marquis was only of that kind which struck one at first sight and for a moment; it faded away on a close comparison of the two faces. Then was brought forward Lord Hoodborough's extraordinary affection for *the young person*—still Lady Charlotte was incredulous. Why allow her to go to India? she asked. Lady Hoodborough could not answer that question, but she was firm in her first belief.

Now how startling to Lady Charlotte was the marquis's inquiry, coming as it did in the midst of his talk about settling his worldly affairs! What a revolution did it make in her feelings! In a moment she gave entire credence to all that she had heard from his wife; and, she said to herself, that knowing her lingering affection for him, he had sent for her to entreat her to befriend his illegitimate daughter. She was not pleased. It required all her good practice in good manners to enable her to answer

steadily his questions about Lady Anne. "We have been much longer than usual without letters," she said, "and are extremely anxious respecting them."

"Was all well when you last heard? Was Miss Aveley still with Lady Anne?"

"She was," was the abrupt reply—more abrupt than Lady Charlotte generally allowed herself to make—then, after a pause, she answered his first question. "When we heard last, Colonel Aveley had long been ill in consequence of his wounds. Anne wrote in wretched spirits, as there seemed no prospect of his recovery."

"If he died, would she return immediately to England?"

"I should think so."

"And Miss Aveley?"

"And Miss Aveley with her, no doubt; if she did not marry in India."

"Did that seem probable?"

"I have heard very little about her,"

Lady Charlotte replied, with evidently increasing coldness. "Most young ladies go to India for the purpose of being married, it is said—and—"

"But," interrupted the marquis quickly, "you have seen Miss Aveley—you cannot think that she was a marriage-speculating young lady?"

"I really know her so slightly that I cannot answer your question."

"But your good opinion of her—because I value your good opinion on all matters—is most important to me."

"That being the case, I should be glad if it were in my power to speak more to your satisfaction. The young lady is, however, almost a stranger to me, and Anne has always found so much to say in her letters about her husband and child, that her residence with her has not in any way added to my knowledge of her character."

The marquis turned his face from her on

his pillow with an expression of disappointment so acute that it might have passed for a spasm of bodily pain. But he was an invalid, unused to contradiction for so long, that he felt hurt, like a spoiled child, on finding that his enthusiasm about Miss Aveley was not instantly shared by Lady Charlotte. She remained silent, pondering on how she should make an excuse for taking her leave ; he, at the same time, was reflecting on the extraordinary change in her manner, from tenderness to the utmost coldness. At length it struck him that the marchioness had communicated her suspicions to her friend—he started, and raising his head on his hand, turned his eyes full on her as he said, “I am grieved that I cannot win from you any warmer commendation of Miss Aveley. I have it much at heart to gain your favour and affection for her.”

“For her !” she repeated with a strongly marked accent of surprise.

“Yes—for her,” he said, speaking slowly and keeping his eyes fixed on her face.

“Yes—for her—she is nearly related to me.”

CHAPTER X.

“And now, with gleams of half extinguished thought,
With many recognitions, dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again :
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years.”

WORDSWORTH.

LADY CHARLOTTE's cheek and brow flushed a deep crimson at the marquis's last words. He saw how the matter was ; and, hoarding up another insult to lay to the charge of his wife, he hastened to relieve her from her embarrassment by adding, “Miss Aveley is my niece—lawfully, honourably, my niece.”

• Lady Charlotte breathed more freely—the glow faded from her cheek, leaving it paler than before—she spoke in her natural, gentle voice, “Were you aware of the relationship when she went to India?”

“No. It is but three days since I discovered it by the letters in that box,” and he pointed to one on a table near him. “Ah, Lady Charlotte!” he continued, “when domestic happiness was lost to me for ever, I sought for a resource in politics; but what a despicable existence is that spent in watching the doublings and windings of party, and taking advantage of occasions, instead of making them and ruling them. I was weary of it, even before my illness, and, when the physicians hinted at death, felt as if I had no cause to wish for life. But all at once a reason for desiring to live presented itself—something like domestic happiness might yet be mine I said, to myself—a happiness at least in which I should have

a part—for should I not be happy in the happiness of that lovely and innocent young girl whom I admired so much?—for whom I might do all that I should have done for a child of my own. Am I not right? Does it not seem so to you—you who love your own little nephew so much?”

“It does—it does, indeed,” Lady Charlotte answered, with generous, womanly sympathy.

He again took her hand, unresisted, and warmed by her feeling, went on to describe how—since he had read the letters—he had passed the time in dreams, alternately, of the past and the future. Then he told of what those pictures of the mind, those gleams of half-extinguished thought, those recognitions, dim and faint, were composed; and why there was mingled with them somewhat of a sad perplexity.

His earliest childhood had been just such a happy one, under the care of his sister

Harriet, fifteen years older than himself, as Lady Charlotte's little nephew was enjoying under her care. She was the oldest, and he the youngest of a family of eight children. His mother died in his infancy, and five of her children, within seven years after, followed her to the tomb, leaving only his eldest sister, his eldest brother, and himself; and then his father married a second time. At that period all his pleasant home remembrances terminated. Things were at once put on a new footing. The lessons taught by his sister were over, and he was sent to school. His brother's tutor was dismissed, and himself sent to college. Thenceforward, only at the returning holiday seasons did he associate with his relatives, either at the town or country mansion—home no longer. Though the escape from study made him regard these periodical visits as times of pleasure, they offered him nothing like the old happiness of his first years, when he was too young to

experience any real sorrow from the deaths in the family,—deaths which made him dearer to his sister, and more the object of her tender indulgence. Still, he sought to bring back from the past some trait of her gentle, loving nature, to interest Lady Charlotte in her, as if he would thus also interest her in the living Harriet.

“For ten years,” he continued, “I thus went and came to my father’s house. During that time, my step-mother had given birth to a child, who died, a circumstance which seemed to render her temper more austere towards her husband’s children, of whom I was fated to be the sole survivor. My brother died abroad, on his travels. I was sent to college, and had not been long there when I was suddenly informed of the death of my sister, without having previously had any intimation of her being dangerously ill. It is true that I had learnt, both from her own letters and from other sources, that her

health was not very good; and I had not seen her for two years, she having been, as I was told, at a watering-place when I was at home. She had reached her thirtieth year, and was still unmarried, having, much to my father's displeasure, refused many suitable proposals for her hand. But now the truth is revealed to me. At that age, after years of effort to overcome her love, after years of constancy on her lover's part, she married, privately, my brother's tutor, him who had been dismissed when the step-mother became the ruler in our house—and that tutor was the Mr. Aveley so long resident in this village. She died in giving birth to her daughter, and the marriage was never made public. I find among the letters some from Charles Aveley, which would do honour to the heart and head of any man, and two or three of a very early date from Arthur Aveley—he is, no doubt, the present Colonel Aveley, Lady Anne's husband, for

one of the letters is simply to thank my father for having used his influence in procuring for him a cadetship in the Indian service."

"Certainly he is the same person," replied Lady Charlotte, "for his name is Arthur."

CHAPTER XI.

"C'est que l'âme de l'homme est une onde limpide
Dont l'azur se ternit à tout vent qui la ride,
Mais qui, dès qu'un moment le vent s'est endormi,
Repolit la surface où le ciel a frémi."

LAMARTINE.

MUCH interesting conversation followed between Lady Charlotte and Lord Hoodborough, on the discovery which he had of a relative whom he intended to make so dear to him—through whom he meant to enjoy so much happiness. Then there was some talk of the best manner of communicating the intelligence to Lady Hoodborough; in this

last matter, Lady Charlotte's intervention was to be employed. She promised her best offices, and, reminding the marquis how long she had been with him, she rang and desired Mr. Hornby to convey a message to Mrs. Weston. The result was that the maid presented herself with the marchioness's compliments, and she should be happy to see Lady Charlotte.

Has not La Rochefoucauld said that we all in the misfortunes of our friends find something not displeasing to us, and in their joys, something that is displeasing? If that great immoralist said so, he never spoke more falsely. No honest man is gratified by the sorrows of others, or dissatisfied by their contentment,—and yet—

Why “and yet?” Because I am following from Lord Hoodborough's to Lady Hoodborough's apartments, Lady Charlotte who is stepping slowly and soundlessly on the finely carpeted corridors, and lobbies, and

staircases. She is an honest-hearted woman ; but, it must be confessed, the feeling with which she dwells on what the marquis has just communicated to her, what gave him so much pleasure, is akin to disappointment, to regret.

The revival of tender sentiments for her old lover, when she pictured him to herself, suffering, lonely, dying, had on her mind a softening, though a saddening effect, in which there was something pleasurable to one so long forbidden to love,—thus it is, that the most unhappy affection is dearer to the heart than the dull void, free from pain. Had the marquis entreated pardon for his wrongs towards her, expressed his unaltered love, and died, she would have cherished his remembrance, and have loved him to the death. But he was going to live and be happy in the affection of another.

Here, she paused. Lady Charlotte had however, like my friend Benjamin Hardy, a

practical mind. She chid herself and summoned back the kindliness of that impulse which had made her at first sympathize with the marquis. He was going to make himself happy in a just and honourable regard for a near relative, and should she regret what all the world would esteem so praiseworthy? And though he had betrayed her, was that a subject on which she should hear him speak even to ask her forgiveness? Ought he, even in dying, to speak of love to her, the friend of his wife? Whom had he also betrayed? The woman whom he married from selfish interested motives. To whom should he speak of forgiveness? To her. To whom only of love? To her. So questioned the straightforward mind with its worldly integrity; and Lady Charlotte again possessed her soul in cheerful obedience to her will, when she entered the presence of the marchioness.

A table, on which that most noble lady

leaned her elbow, was covered with the morning's papers. She was indefatigable in her pursuit in the newspapers, of all that could nourish and support her liberal politics. The marquis, on the contrary, like those who really take a part in political life, cared less for knowing what is daily printed about it. Besides, he had not yet felt well enough to interest himself in the news of the day. She was that kind of constant, confirmed invalid, who is, of all persons, the most interested in it. She pushed aside her papers however, when her visitor took a seat near her, and then answered the necessary questions respecting her health in a more lively and satisfactory way than usual, adding an expression of her intention to remain at Downes House.

These preliminaries past, Lady Charlotte said, she had been very glad, on Lord Hoodborough's invitation to have an opportunity of knowing personally how he was. Lady

Hoodborough's only reply was, "Oh, indeed!"

Then there was a short silence,—and then there was indicated a curious affinity between her thoughts and her husband's, for her next words were precisely what his had been, "Have you heard lately from Lady Anne?"

Lady Charlotte could merely answer as she had before answered.

"Had you received your letters, or the papers this morning before you came out?"

"No."

"The Indian news has arrived, and I see the death of Colonel Aveley is noticed," said the marchioness, in that cold tone which characterized her, but there was something more than usual in her accent, and in her scrutinizing look.

It was now Lady Charlotte's turn to utter an "Indeed?"—one of real question and surprise, not of assumed indifference.

Again there was a pause. The marchioness had expected something more, or something different. She had made up her mind that the marquis knew of the colonel's death, and had sent for Lady Charlotte to make arrangements with Lady Anne for Miss Aveley, in whom he was so nearly interested. The silence continued; for, dwelling on her sister's state, and on "the various turns of fate below," Lady Charlotte was touched and thoughtful; she felt now, for the first time, awakened to a true affection for her, when sorrow had visited her.

At length Lady Hoodborough opened her lips again, "Colonel Aveley is highly spoken of—he seems to have held the most liberal political views."

Lady Charlotte replied simply, "I am deeply grieved for my sister; I am sure from all that she has written to me, that her husband was a most excellent, a most enlightened man. Poor Anne! What a melan-

choly voyage it will be for her, with her little child !”

This was a good opportunity for introducing *the young person's* name. Why not add, and with Miss Aveley? But no—something secret has been planned; they should proceed in their own way, however, if Lady Charlotte would indeed, descend to take a part in Lord Hoodborough's plans about his illegitimate daughter; and thus, the marchioness's suspicious temper followed on the track which years before it had opened for itself.

CHAPTER XII.

"But mine is not, quoth she, like other wounde
For which no reason can finde remedy.
'Was never such but might the like be founde'
Said she, 'and though no reason may apply
Solve to your sore, yet love can higher flye
Than reasons reach, and oft hath wonders done.'"

SPENCER.

At length, Lady Charlotte shook off her meditative mood, and turned to the business which she had undertaken for the marquis. "It is singular," she said, "that I should just now hear this news from you; it is strangely connected with the subject of Lord Hoodborough's conversation."

"Then he knew of Colonel Aveley's death?"

"Not at all. From you I have first received the intelligence."

"Yes, but he may have heard it, although he did not communicate it to you."

"I can see no reason for that."

"There may be no reason apparent to you, but there may be one," persisted the marchioness.

Lady Charlotte felt that this sort of discussion of supposed motives would become embarrassing; for, to compete with Lady Hoodborough's dialectic skill in drawing subtle inferences, far surpassed her powers; she, therefore, determined to enter at once openly on the tale which she had to tell. And now, a more generous purpose than any which had yet entered her mind presented itself—the reconciliation of the proud and mutually insulted pair. All her late emotions had brought her heart into the

best state for undertaking boldly a noble work, and she addressed herself to it with a winning expression of unaffected candour in her countenance.

“My dear Lady Hoodborough,” she said, “that little point cannot be worth arguing ; it is sufficient for me that I feel quite sure the marquis had not heard of Colonel Aveley’s death, because it was of him, of Lady Anne, and of Miss Aveley, that we spoke at first.”

Now, *the because* was the worst in the world, in the marchioness’s opinion ; but she had not time to prove it to be so, for Lady Charlotte proceeded rapidly to relate her story.

With some of the glowing hues of feminine fancy, and with delicate traits of tenderness and love, she made the marquis’s little family history, and the details about his happy childhood and neglected youth, more touching, infinitely, than he had done.

Then, affectionately exulting in what should have given Lady Hoodborough pleasure, she reminded her that she had never given credit to her suspicions respecting her husband, and warmly entreated her to banish them from her mind, now that they were proved to her to be so groundless, so false. She would not allow herself to be disheartened, though she observed that the settled features of the marchioness remained undisturbed by any expression of feeling. She went on warmly to entreat her to take a part in the marquis's happiness in this new-found relative, and to secure his esteem by a generous offer of her protection and countenance in introducing his niece to the world.

This was going much farther than Lord Hoodborough had intended, as he professed to wish for no more than that his wife should not annoy him by declaring openly her disbelief of his assertions respecting

Miss Aveley. It is not probable that his proposal would have met with any better reception than Lady Charlotte's.

"His niece?" repeated Lady Hoodborough, when she ended her well-meant solicitations, "his niece?—I cannot, my dear friend, believe the excellently invented tale to which you seem to give credit."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Lady Charlotte, "that you do not believe it?"

"Most certainly, I do not. You were not shewn, I suppose, that collection of letters of which his lordship spoke?"

"I could not have ventured on anything approaching so near an insult as to ask to see them, even if it had occurred to me to doubt his word."

"His word!"—and now something like emotion quivered on the marchioness's features, and was betrayed in her voice—it was a momentary rebelling of suppressed anger and scorn. "How little you know what he

is, although your acquaintance with him began before mine, or his word would not yet pass with you as of some worth !”

There was a sting in this, yet the marchioness knew it not, meant it not. Ay, Lady Charlotte had indeed been first acquainted with him ! She had a right to know how valueless his words were ! Yet, she felt that she could not think of him as Lady Hoodborough did ; and that she had been his wife she never should have uttered to any human being the thought that he was capable of falsehood, that he had been guilty of it. She sank back on her chair with the gesture of one who indicates the abandonment of a hopeless task. Everything declared the sincerity of her conviction in the cause which she had been advocating, and the marchioness was satisfied on that point—her friend, at least, was not entering into a plot to deceive her.

But Lady Charlotte remembered that she

had gone too far in what she had undertaken, and again she spoke; not with the expectation of softening the unrelenting temper of Lady Hoodborough, but solely with the desire to put the affair in its true light, and take on herself the responsibility of what she had proposed. This, however, rendered it no better—rather worse, indeed. Lord Hoodborough asked no other favour, she said, than that which was justly due to him,—that Lady Hoodborough should not assert anything respecting Miss Aveley in contradiction to his statement.

With marked asperity, she replied, “If it becomes necessary for me to speak to any one, of any point in Lord Hoodborough’s conduct, I shall not swerve from my usual course, with regard to all persons and subjects—I shall speak the truth.”

Lady Charlotte ventured, though playfully, to apply the logical method to herself, and to shew her that, building on false

premises, she might establish a superstructure apparently real and true in each part, as she proceeded, but altogether deceptive as a whole.

This had so bad an effect, that, fearing to offend irrecoverably, she said she would not discuss the subject any further. "I shall leave it to time," she added, "and to the proofs which it may please the marquis to lay before you, to convince you, my dear Lady Hoodborough; until one or other of us has changed her opinion, we will not talk of this painful business. It may, in truth, never again be necessary to allude to it,—the young lady is so far away, we know so little of her that she may be already married, and not choose to return to England, so that Lord Hoodborough may be disappointed in his intentions."

The marchioness thought all this not in the least doubtful. She was convinced that her husband knew that Miss Aveley was not

married, and that he had planned her return. But isolated, invalided, shy, studious, and ill-suited for general society, as she was, Lady Charlotte's company was too valuable to her to be lightly thrown away. She willingly assented to her proposal, and they separated in apparent good understanding and kindness.

Lady Charlotte found on her return home packets from India, confirming the sad tidings given her by Lady Hoodborough. Scarcely has her mourning been made, and scarcely have her replies to the letters of Lady Anne and Miss Aveley been written, when there are other packets for her from India. A letter from Lady Anne, they had reached Calcutta,—she was ill after her journey. Another letter,—a hurried one from Harriet Aveley. Lady Anne was no more !

CHAPTER XIII.

"I love to see the misty morn,
And cross the gusty hill,
And wind the darksome homeward lane
When all is hushed and still.

From way thus distant, lone and drear,
How sweet it is to come,
And leaving all behind so dim,
Approach our pleasant home.

While every lowly lattice shines,
Along the village street,
Where round the blazing evening fire,
The cheerful household meet.

As passing by each friendly door,
At length we reach our own,
And find the smile of kindred love,
More kind by absence grown."

The Return Home.

It is strange that I cannot prevent those
childish verses from ringing through my

ears. The *dii majores gentium*, our mighty poets, who could offer me in three lines some magic truth, revealing the whole moral of life, do not come before me to suggest what I have to tell, but in their stead appears a nameless rhymers. It is well. The simple, childlike, unnoted beings who live in love, need not to be introduced by a higher harbinger.

John Hardy was right when he said that Miss Aveley was coming home. He was now sure that he was right; he had had letters from her. Yes, she was coming. Lady Anne's last entreaties to her had been, that she would take her son away as speedily as possible from a country so often fatal to the health of European children. But even had she not promised the dying mother to embark without delay for England, her love for the child, her anxiety for his welfare, would have prompted her to do so. Her first duty was now the care of his life, but

it was not a duty which could be performed without some conflict. She must leave India, and she had not seen Gordon. He had accepted employment under the Armenian merchant to whom Asaph Hussein recommended him, and was far from Calcutta when she reached that city.

If she would bring him to her side she must stay a couple of months. She did not allow herself to think of it—she wrote her farewell, and confided her letter to the Armenian, giving him also the thousand pounds of which she discovered she was mistress soon after her arrival in India, and which her uncle's liberality had enabled her to leave untouched. With this money she told Gordon she became his partner in his mercantile speculations, and she desired to have an account of them as soon as she should arrive in England. Thus, like my friend Hardy, she too is returning to her native land poorer than when she left it.

She has sailed. Fading in the distance she sees the black lowering temple of Juggernaut; and again she thinks with awe of the idolatry which thus rears its head in defiance of reason and truth. But she also thinks with shame of what Christians have made their religion in the eyes of the people of this land. Soon, however, the monstrous landmark disappears, and, in the long monotony of her voyage, she has time for meditation on other subjects—and, as she meditates, she wonders at herself, and marvels at time. Is she the same being that she was? Have but a few years passed since she left England? Of what a long lifetime she seems to have had experience in the changes through which she has gone! To have lived so much in thought and feeling, even without that variety of scene and manners which have passed before her, appears to demand a whole existence.

It is thus she often reflects as she paces

the deck in the evening. Then she recalls the time when Gordon, whom she scarcely regarded, was her shipmate—tender remembrances succeed, and many ardent hopes. When shall they meet? When shall they speak heart to heart, and soul to soul again? If some regrets and fears follow these questions they are now banished. She has a mother's part to perform towards little Charles, she must not be sad, and during the day she has no time to indulge in reverie whilst he is gamboling about her. Her heart, too, is gladdened by his increased bloom, and strength, and activity, as they advance on their voyage. She herself, worn by her anxieties, recovered her health, and when she reached England, had regained all her former vigour of mind and of body. She had grown hopeful, and more hopeful as day after day was abridged from the time when she should again behold her native land,—to her, with truth, “the happier

island in the watery waste," and not the prison-house of toil which it seemed to Benjamin Hardy on his return.

In London she dismissed two maids, Englishwomen, whom she had brought with her as attendants—Lady Anne's former maid, and the child's nurse—and now she may be followed on her journey to the village. She arrived ten days sooner than she supposed she should when she wrote to John Hardy, and she is stealing a march on that dear friend.

Towards evening—a May evening—her post-chaise rolled past. The boy was asleep on her lap, and I saw her face through the carriage window, for she was gazing out. The tears fell slowly down her cheeks, yet her countenance expressed only a holy calmness. It was not the peace obtained by hard-won victory, which gave to Eugenia's serenity so subdued an aspect; Harriet's peace was that of purity and of a noble

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freedom in the choice of good. But she has passed, and is mounting the hill. She had heard of the new house—never of its having been left—not a word of loss or of misfortune reached her from John Hardy's pen—and soon he will have neither loss nor misfortune to think of having her again.

She dried her eyes, and waked up the little boy, that he and she might be all gladness, in the glad surprise which they were bringing. It was getting dark as she entered the gate of the enclosure before the house, but she could see the venerable form of her friend standing on the steps of the hall-door. He was giving some directions to the Boots from the village inn—they related to his intended departure for London the next day in order to wait her arrival.

Boots was so prompt in opening the door of her chaise, that before John Hardy had time to wonder who the stranger might be, she was in his arms. And now her serenity

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was gone—she was only a woman—she laughed and sobbed by turns—the old man wept silently, yet he trembled. They knew not that they had moved from the spot on which they met, but they found themselves in the parlour seated side by side, and the little one was on his knee, murmuring with his sweet infant voice the words which Harriet had taught him, “Dear grandpapa Hardy.” And now the tears were gone—there were only smiles in the loving eyes of the good man and his adopted daughter, as they gazed each into the other’s face and noted the changes which time had wrought.

That each showed the traces of the years which had passed neither could deny. Not over the sensitive and the thoughtful do the days glide and leave no furrows in their passage. But that each looked well was the next impression, and to that a glad utterance was given. Then followed many quick, short phrases ; many hurried questions ; many

broken replies ; many rapid details,—all would have seemed to some persons to tell nothing, or only to tell something as confusedly as if it were the relation of a disjointed dream,—yet what was said was clear and explicit to the speaker and to the listener.

Darkness came on as thus they talked, and no one dared to intrude uncalled on the happiness of the good master of the house—it was sacred. Two figures had slipped away unseen from the parlour as he entered it with Harriet ; and now the necessity for having candles recalled him to those duties which he had forgotten in his surprise and joy. He did not, as the true gentleman ought to have done, ring the bell for lights and refreshment—he opened the door and called old Mary—then he summoned Madame Lenoir and Eugene—then Diggins and everybody who was near—lastly, he asked for candles and tea.

Mary was shaken hands with first. She curtsied frequently, uttered many a "Dear me!" but expressed in more varied terms her admiration of little Charles. In the meantime Harriet's eyes rested on those who were strangers to her—the mother and son. Their beauty, and the simple grace of their deportment, as they stood modestly back attracted her admiration. At length, knowing how ignorant her good friend was of ceremonies of introduction, as of all other ceremonies, she advanced to the widow, and, taking her hand, expressed a hope that as Mr. Hardy's friend she might claim the privilege of acquaintanceship with one who must also be his friend.

"I am a stranger from a distant country," Eugenia faltered out, whilst she blushed deeply, "and Mr. Hardy has insisted that my home shall be with him."

"Then we are sisters," said Harriet, kissing her cheek, "for when I was friendless

he became my father also. Your brother?" she added, looking at Eugene.

"No—my son."

"Is it possible?" she exclaimed.

"I am a widow—I was married young."

Harriet pressed her hand as if to entreat her pardon—she feared that she had thoughtlessly recalled past sorrows.

Poor Eugenia!—the tears sprang to her eyes. When had she heard a voice like this? When met looks so truthful and so mild? When seen dignity so softened by a gracious and a genial nature?

And now the party sat down to tea—a tea with as many accompaniments as those which heaped the table on Benjamin's return. But who shall tell the rapture of this meal. Eugenia presided; Harriet was on her right; next her the little East Indian stranger; then close to him the good man of the house, and next him was the young West Indian. They sat as close together as they could with

any degree of convenience. One would have thought that they had much secret tenderness to whisper into each other's ears. But no!—their joy and love were not talkative. They said little, and that little was about the child, who seemed a point of attraction for all their thoughts.

Soon, however, he had to retire, and then Harriet found in her bedroom just such a little cot as she could have wished for him. It was receiving the last touches of arrangement from the hands of Mrs. Diggins, whose property it was, having been a present from Mr. Hardy. When Will ran home with the news of the arrivals, Kitty sent it off instantly, and followed it in the hope of seeing Miss Aveley and the dear little child. To do her justice, it must be told that it did not occur to her until afterwards, that though his name was Aveley, he was a nephew of the great house of Woreham; but, that being remembered, he was regarded by her with considerable respect.

She begged to be allowed to assist in undressing him ; and Harriet, goodnaturedly chatting with her about the news of the village, little suspected what a cause of speculation she herself had formerly been to Kitty. But Mrs. Diggins having departed, and the child being asleep, she gave another hour to her friends in the parlour. Then came the hour for her to seek repose after her fatigues. She required rest, but it was long before she could rest.

In her chamber were the old books and pictures which she had brought from the cottage ; and the furniture was that of her father's room which she had kept. The bed he had lain on in the sleep from which there is no waking, whilst she wept and watched beside him. And now she wept, but her tears were soothing. She could lay her head calmly on the pillow which had supported his, for she was listening with delight to the soft breathing of the child—another Charles

Aveley. Yet, but for that breathing which told of life, actual, vigorous, fresh, her own past existence, as she recalled it, would have seemed all unreal.

CHAPTER XIV.

" Sweet is the infant's waking smile,
And sweet the old man's rest—
But middle age by no fond wile,
No soothing calm is blest.

Still in the world's hot restless gleam
The soul pursues her task,
While vainly for some pleasant dream
The wandering glances ask."

KEBLE.

I PUT aside some incidents attendant on the return of Harriet and the young relative of Lady Charlotte and Lord Woreham, in order to speak of one from whom I seem to have wandered too far—my hero, Benjamin. I only say seem to have wandered, in reality

I have not done so. His life followed the law of every mortal life; it was entangled with the lives of many individuals; his fate was bound up with their fate. To make him known, I had to make them known also.

And now, I feel disposed to indulge in reverie concerning him alone, as when I watched him setting out on his career, full of the intrepid hopes of youth and ignorance — as when I saw him press Harriet Aveley's hand, bidding her farewell, and guessed that there was in his heart a feeling which might lead him back, long years afterwards, to seek the glance of her kind eyes. A thousand circumstances of that time come back to memory now that he and she are about to meet again. I would con them all over, comparing what was with what is—contrasting what he intended should be, with what had been. But that is idle work! Besides, he has not yet completed the task which he

has set himself,—that of being rich, and great, and virtuous, and honoured; the moral must come when all that is done.

His efforts had been great and persevering, yet he met with disappointment; and something awaits him, more strange, more startling than disappointment.

He received, at last, letters from Gordon, and was much surprised to find them dated from Smyrna; [still more surprised to find that he had done with the military life, and, under the auspices of some merchants there, was engaging eagerly in commerce. After having gone through the important details of matters in which Hardy, in Liverpool, could assist him, he went on thus,—

“I shall be in England before twelve months have passed. How much I shall have to tell you! I may prepare, I think, to stand once more firm against your condemnation; you will disapprove, if you are the man you were, as much of my giving up the soldier’s

life, as you did of my embracing it. You may have erred in advancing too impetuously to meet fortune, but I am sure you have fulfilled my prophecy,—you have never turned your back on her. I, Hardy, have done that, and I must abide the consequences. I dare not in a letter enter into particulars explanatory of the change which has been wrought in me. Wait for these until we meet—until we can compare notes on the course which each of us has pursued since we parted.”

This letter afforded much food for cogitation to Hardy. It was not written in a depressed tone, yet there was no exultation in it. It was like the language of a man who had set to work in earnest, as he himself set to work after his failure. Miss Aveyley’s name did not occur in it. No; he knows not how to explain this.

But he holds in his hand another letter, in which it does occur. It is a very sober

communication from his uncle ; she is with him again, at last.

In Gordon's letter there had been nothing in the least like what he expected ; so it was with his uncle's. There was no gladness, no hearty expression of his desire to see him now. On that point, it was merely said, " You will come to see us, I suppose, when you have time. Be so kind as to write before you do come, that I may be prepared to make you comfortable."

" To make me comfortable ! " repeated Benjamin. " This is very unlike my uncle's late warmth of expression, after I had performed what was but a common act of justice towards him. Perhaps Miss Aveley has shewn some reluctance to renew her acquaintance with me ? But, then, he put me off at Christmas also. Now that she is there, I cannot be satisfied until I know how she regards me,—whether I may hope or not. My uncle may have misinterpreted something that she has said."

He persuaded himself that this was the case; he allowed himself to hope. And disobeying, without hesitation, his uncle's orders to write before visiting him, prepared to set out instantly. He had business in Bristol, which he discovered he had better transact in person; and from thence he would proceed to the village, without the formality of announcing himself by letter.

'Twas said—'twas done. He started that night, and the next morning, bright with the greenery of May, he beheld the banks of the Wye, which, on setting out in life before, he had seen in the varied glories of October. Fresh, dewy, invigorating was the time; he drank in the spirit of the season, — but it was temperately, almost timidly. He loved, yet the nearer he drew to her whom he loved, the less he dared to hope. Still, he acknowledged that there was something more happy, more youthful in this love, with the doubts and fears which

accompanied it, than there had been in any feeling which had stirred his heart, since he travelled that road on leaving his early home.

His business being quickly accomplished in Bristol, he pursued his way, and in the evening alighted again at our inn. He chose on this occasion to dispense with the services of Boots, and to carry his little carpet-bag himself. Hurrying on, he only stopped at Will Diggins's door to deposit it, and to bespeak a bed for the night. He looked so serious, that Kitty, in receiving the bag, had not a word to say, either in the way of welcome, or of curious inquiry. She was surprised at seeing him, as she had not heard that he was coming; but when she had time to reflect, she only thought his arrangement for stopping there a very good one, occupied as old Mr. Hardy's house then was. The idea had suggested itself to Benjamin in consequence of his uncle's

strange expression about making him comfortable, for he only knew of his having one guest; but a fear of intruding on that one had crept upon him.

Undetained then, by Kitty, he passed on, reached the hill, and as he walked slowly up it, gazed around from time to time on the landscape—a landscape so well known to him. The masses of verdure around the castle, and the less heavy foliage of the groves of Downes House, were as charming in their spring dress as in their autumn one, though it was less varied. But the chesnut trees shading the cottage were more lovely than ever. His contracted brow expanded in grateful acknowledgment of the beauty of the scene, yet hope could not be won to his bosom.

CHAPTER XV.

"Thou watchful taper, by whose silent light,
I lonely pass the melancholy night;
Now, as thy fearful flames by day decline,
And only during night presume to shine;
Their humble rays not daring to aspire
Before the sun, the fountain of their fire:
So mine, with conscious shame, and equal awe,
To shades obscure, and solitude withdraw;
Nor dare their light before her eyes disclose,
From whose bright beams their being first arose."

CONGREVE.

WHEN Benjamin reached the verge of the enclosure before his uncle's house, he paused to call up all his courage—and then to listen—for he heard a voice—Harriet's—

Another voice, playfully repeating her words—Is it an echo from the world of spirits? Has she whom he deemed but “a being of the mind,” come hither to mock him? He started forward to the gate, and beheld on the grass-plot two well known forms—wondrous sport of destiny! They, whose names written together seemed potent as a spell to call up, or to lay contending passions; they in bodily presence, stood before him side by side—Harriet and Eugenia!

Happily, he was not seen. He retreated a few steps hidden by the hedge, until he reached a tree, against which he leaned. He needed support. He threw off his hat—he thrust his clenched fist into his bosom, pressing it heavily on his heart to quiet what was going on there. The paroxysm ended in unconsciousness.

When he recovered, he was lying at the foot of the tree; from a branch overhead

gushes of melody came from the throat of a nightingale, and in the firmament above, the crescent moon, with a bright planet by her side, shone with a soft enchanting lustre. Could he not forget himself when so much of heaven was thus revealed to him? No. For he heard only the two voices which had startled him—saw only the two faces from which he had fled. With such a sigh as one might abandon life, he returned to it and arose. He staggered at first, but soon regaining strength, he passed the house; no one was to be seen—doors and windows were closed.

After a long walk, he scarcely knew whither, he returned to Kitty's. All there had retired to rest except herself; for, after having had a discussion about Benjamin with her husband, she waited up for him with a determined purpose of testifying her respect and admiration. She had asserted that young Mr. Hardy would be a nice

match for either one or other of the ladies at old Mr. Hardy's. Will could not agree to that—he had still a sort of grudge against Benjamin about his uncle's losses. Kitty flamed up in his defence, declaring that he was very handsome, and fit for any lady. And as to gentlemen, she had seen them, she supposed, at the Castle, and ought to know? And she had never seen any lord or marquis more quiet and stately than young Mr. Hardy was, that very day.

In short, Kitty having a matrimonial scheme in her head, was not to be silenced; and Will, as what was safest, yielded to her reasons, and beat a retreat. How then, was Benjamin's admirer startled, when opening the door for her "handsome gentleman," the light of a candle which she held fell upon his features. So pale, so haggard, so worn, so downcast, he was, that all his good looks had fled.

"Dear me, sir!" she exclaimed, "you are ill."

"I am," he replied, "I have been so ill that I did not go to my uncle's. I thought it best to wait till the morning, when I shall be better, I know ; I shall go to bed at once."

She said that he had done what was kind in not alarming the good old gentleman. But now, what could she do for him? Nothing—nothing ; he refused all her offers. However, she slipped up after him to his room with a biscuit and a glass of wine, which she placed on his table. "It is some of our kind master's best wine which he left us—you must take it, sir."

He thanked her—said he was sure he should be better after he had slept ; and she left him.

After he had slept? Yes. But it was long before he slept. He saw like the poet the timid flame of his taper fade away in the light of day, and still his weary eyes refused to close. But at last, he slumbered. It was only for an hour—again they opened

heavily to the light, and met eyes, dim and wet with tears, bent compassionately on him. His uncle holding back the curtain of his bed, was gazing at him.

“How do you feel, Ben?” he said, and the voice which had been firm on their former meetings was tremulous. “Will, when he came to his work at six o’clock told me of your having been taken ill at his house last night. Are you better now, do you think?”

Benjamin raised himself on his elbow whilst his uncle spoke, and was returning his gaze—all was revealed in the look which they exchanged—no farther confidence was needed. “My head aches still—that is all, uncle,” he replied to the repeated enquiry, how he felt. “I shall be ready in a few minutes to go back with you to breakfast,” and he sprang out of bed.

“No, I have come to breakfast with you; I told the ladies you were here, and that you

would dine with them ; Do you really feel able to rise ? ”

“ Oh, quite—quite able.”

His uncle then left him. At breakfast, in the midst of enquiries about business and Liverpool matters, he contrived to thrust in the subject, which he knew must be named, in this way, “ There is a West Indian lady with us, who knows you.”

“ I saw her last night,” was the reply, “ I have been long endeavouring through persons in Jamaica to obtain tidings of her. She is the widow of Sir Walcot Downes, in dying, he acknowledged to a friend of mine that her son is his lawful heir.”

“ I am glad to hear that,” said John Hardy, his face brightening even more on learning that Benjamin had not with cold indifference forgotten Eugenia, than at the knowledge of the direct evidence in her favour which might now be procured. “ I am glad to hear that Sir Walcot did some-

thing like justice at the last. But she wishes to continue as she is a little longer. She goes by the name of Madame Lenoir ; for you see, Benjamin, when she came among us, she passed for a Frenchwoman, and honourably supported herself and her boy, by teaching some of the little girls in the village ; she has had a hard—a very hard life, since her father's troubles, and death."

Nothing more was said. Benjamin thrust his breakfast from before him, and leaned his head on his hand. His uncle in a short time prepared to leave him, recommending him a walk to get rid of his head-ache, and appointing two as his dinner-hour ; for Miss Aveley still liked the old-fashioned early hours ; this was the only mention of her name.

Benjamin felt disposed to remain head on hand, brooding on his late hopes, now, like embers of a fire hastily trodden out. But that would not do. He started up, and

set out on a long ramble through lonely and rugged spots, which he had not visited since his boyhood. At length he became interested in the scenes around him, and he ceased to dwell so intensely on the world within his bosom. And now, he thinks he can *seem* again a man of common life, free from passion, and he bends his steps once more to the new house.

There was unusual silence in the parlour in which Harriet and Eugenia sat, for each was full of thought. The latter deeply troubled in her soul since she had heard that she should that day meet Benjamin. The former only occupied by tender remembrances of her father and Gordon connected with his name,—for she was ignorant of everything except that Madame Lenoir had become acquainted with him in Jamaica.

Thus the two sat side by side at work, and the contrast in their beauty made the

loveliness of each more striking. A stranger could not have said whether Harriet's dark blue eyes, radiant, yet mild; her fair complexion; her brown hair; her full, finely curved lips; the aquiline nose which gave such an expression of dignity to her face; claimed more admiration than Eugenia's soft black eyes, so large and sweet; her dark transparent skin; her straight Grecian nose; her mouth, wanting firmness in its lines, but so expressive of innocence and tenderness. A stranger, I say, could not have decided on which of these two to bestow most admiration. Hardy involuntarily decided. Alas! for the woman who errs even through love. Pity was all he had for Eugenia; and never until that moment when he stood in the presence of the two, did he know Harriet's power over him.

On his entering, she rose, and extending both her hands to him, welcomed him with warmth, with heartfelt kindness. Whilst

her greeting was passing, Eugenia had time to command herself; she rose, and timidly offering her hand, said she hoped he was better, for his uncle had told her he had not been well.

“Oh, Mr. Hardy did not mention that to me,” said Harriet, “I am sorry to hear it—but I hope you do feel better, Benjamin.”

She spoke in the truest sisterly spirit—there was no emotion; he felt that he must not betray any—he made as light of his illness as possible. There were then some allusions to old times, and to his former acquaintance with Madame Lenoir; and at last he could appear at his ease, and Eugenia had recovered her usual composure.

Now came Eugene overflowing with delight at seeing Benjamin, and being permitted to talk openly of Jamaica, and to recal all the happy tricks of childhood. Now came the little fellow, the pet of all—

“Charles Aveley,” Harriet said, as looking full at Benjamin with a tear trembling in her eye, she placed the child on his knee. Now came the good man of the house—each countenance lighted up—for his sake, all were determined to banish every show of sadness. He was happy, and the dinner was a cheerful one.

In the evening—in the twilight, Benjamin spoke to Harriet of his friend Gordon. His words were scarcely audible, and her reply, though it only conveyed some simple matters of fact about his establishing himself at Smyrna for the present, was indistinct—her voice trembled—her cheek was crimson.

At night, when Benjamin’s hour came for returning to his friend Kitty, he said “good bye,” instead of “good night.”

“But we shall see you to morrow?” all exclaimed.

“No—I leave by five o’clock in the

morning ; by setting out at that hour I can meet a coach about ten miles off which will take me on."

His uncle did not expostulate with him on the shortness of his visit. Harriet said a few words about his giving so little time to an old friend. Eugenia was silent, her boy had gone to bed, otherwise from him, Benjamin would have encountered much opposition.

But he is gone. He sleeps when he lays his head on his pillow, like one who has no more to fear ; and returns to Liverpool, like one who has no more to hope.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ There was once a gentle time
When the worlde was in its prime;
And everie day was holydaye,
And everie monthe was lovelie Maye.
Thenne a rosie, dimplede cheeke,
And a blue eye fonde and meeke;
And a ringlette-wreathenne browe,
And a lowe voice silverre-sweet,
From a lippè without deceite:
Onlie these the heartes could move
Of the simple swaines to love.”

“ Oh, for the old true-love time,
When the worlde was in its prime ! ”

CROLY.

WE have heard of a rare garden in
ancient days with golden apples on its trees,

but not of it would I speak, though I have in view just now a garden enclosing as much of happiness as falls to the lot of us mortals—still golden apples grew not in it. There was, too, the garden of Alcinous, and that has tempted me much, when in dreams I have listened to “the man for wisdom’s various arts renowned” telling the hospitable king his long tale of suffering and of cunning,—his old woes, so ably baffled, ever new to man in their interest,—yet these tempt me not now, for I hear a gentler voice than that of Ulysses tell also strange things of human destiny.

There were the gardens of Armida made to kindle, whilst they concealed, the heedless passion of youth. There were the gardens of Shalimar, planted and watered for the Eastern despot’s pleasures—I pass them by—and with them pass that garden in which Boccaccio has described a different kind of sensuality seeking forgetfulness of the horrors

of pestilence. The garden towards which I turn is that of the truest of voluptuaries—it is John Hardy's.

Now, in the sweet May evenings, he is there with his children, Harriet and Eugenia, and his grandchildren, Eugene and Charles—the children and grandchildren of his heart. And shall he not enjoy the blessings thus granted him in their fullest measure? Yes—and like the voluptuary he will not look beyond the present—will not regard the chances which are against his happiness continuing long as it is. He may enjoy fearlessly, for though his enjoyments should end, they cannot, by being more largely tasted, end in bitterness. Drink of them then to the full, good John, in your little Eden, with its trim hedge-rows around it! Inhale the sweets of your flowers! Exult in the promise of your fruits! Be glad when the ringing laugh of Eugene, or the little one's infantine imitation of it, reaches your ear!

Or come hither to this grassy bank which terminates your domain, where, under those fine beeches, you have placed a rustic seat; take Charles on one knee, let Eugene, kneeling beside you, place his elbows on the other—a favourite attitude of his. Here are seats for Eugenia and Harriet,—now you may listen to that which pleases your ear even better than the children's mirth. Ay, what pleases you better, I believe, than the tales of Ulysses pleased king Alcinous—let Harriet talk to you of what she saw in India.

One evening they sat thus, every eye turned to her, all intent on her words, when Lady Charlotte, Lord Woreham, and Philip, the young viscount, now frequent visitors at John Hardy's, found their way into the garden. Her ladyship, pleased in contemplating a group so interesting, would have remained unnoticed for a little time, but the viscount's pleasure on seeing his playfellows

was still greater than hers, and was not to be restrained. He darted off to Eugene and his cousin; the quiet was over; the three children instantly engaged in noisy play.

Lady Charlotte gave her hand kindly to Eugenia, but met Harriet with an affectionate embrace. And now let me relate the terms on which they stand towards each other, whilst the earl is walking with the old man round his garden, and whilst Lady Charlotte occupies the seat which he has just left between his two fair daughters. As she took it she could not but think, turning from one lovely face to the other, there were many fine gentlemen of her acquaintance who would have envied him had they seen him as she had. Yet she herself formed no bad addition to the picture of pretty women. Though some years older than the others, and though a few lines of care might be traced on her brow and around her mouth, she was still strikingly handsome. All too

that was charming in her manners was now enhanced by perfect sincerity in every act which was amiable and kind.

Harriet had appeared serene, nay, even cheerful to Benjamin, yet her mind was troubled by anxiety about Gordon, and her equanimity had been also severely tried in another way. Lady Anne confided to her letters and documents for the earl and Lady Charlotte. Among these was her will, carefully and formally drawn up, but of its contents she was quite ignorant. When she learnt them she found it difficult to repress a strong feeling of indignation. Lady Charlotte was left sole guardian of little Charles. This seemed to her at first so cruel towards herself, and so false towards her uncle, that although she did not speak, Lady Charlotte understood how deeply she was wounded—her countenance expressed what her tongue did not.

“ You did not expect this, Miss Aveley ? ”
she said.

"I had no reason to expect it, as my uncle had so often repeated to Lady Anne his wishes on that point—and as she knew my love for Charles—my devotion to him."

Lady Charlotte could value rightly all that was generous and noble ; she fully appreciated Colonel Aveley's honourable confidence in his wife, in leaving his fortune at her disposal, yet she felt called on too, to say something for a sister who had shown so much confidence in her. "Can you not allow, my dear Miss Aveley, that my sister's wish was very natural," she asked. "I am a nearer relative of the child than you—I am older—perhaps better acquainted with the world than you—she might think me more fit to direct him when he grows up. Believe me, I shall not wish to separate him from you so long as circumstances permit you to give so much care to him as at present." She spoke so gently, so kindly, that Harriet was soothed.

But then there was something more to be communicated ; and Lady Charlotte's aristocratic blood rushed to her cheek as she went on to tell that Lady Anne had left to herself, as well as to Harriet, two thousand pounds. "As I had not the happiness of knowing Colonel Aveley," she said, "I can scarcely think the bequest to me was suggested by him."

"He would have been glad, I am sure," replied Harriet, "that Lady Anne should do what could not but gratify her affection. Pardon me, dear Lady Charlotte, for having appeared dissatisfied with any part of the will! Had my uncle known you, had he seen your care of Lord Woreham's motherless boy, he must have acknowledged, as I do, that his own could not be in better hands than yours."

Lady Charlotte never knew, what the noble heart kept to itself, that it had been her uncle's intention to give her four thousand

pounds—and Lady Anne had known that well—but “the ruling passion strong in death” triumphed over her better principles, and over her lately awakened conscience. Peace to her soul! Let her failings be forgotten! Harriet did not dwell on them; and she gained by her generous forbearance a true friend in Lady Charlotte—a true parent for little Charles.

He and she were frequently at the castle; but she could not be persuaded to remove there altogether. She would not do so much wrong to her best of friends as to leave him for more than a day, although he had a companion so dear to him as Eugenia. The latter was also sometimes at the castle, and was still the unconscious object of wondrous admiration on the part of Lord Woreham, who, I am sorry to say, at this period caused poor Hester Downes more uneasiness than he had ever before done. But Troy town was taken at last. Courage, Hester! We shall see!

There is one thing in favour of Miss Downes. Madame Lenoir is not, as she once was, the theme of Lady Charlotte's encomiums ; she has a new idea in her head, and Harriet obtains all her praise. What better match for her brother than Lord Hoodborough's niece ? She makes him of importance by informing him of the secret of the relationship. She is sure that the marquis will introduce her to the world as he would a daughter, and that he will leave her all the property at his disposal, and she suggests to the earl that he could hardly form a more desirable connexion.

There was something very agreeable to Lady Charlotte in this plan of hers. By it Harriet would become the aunt of little Charles, and have, as it were, some of the rights restored to her of which she had been robbed. She, herself, with one so affectionate and right-minded as Miss Aveley for a sister-in-law, would always be secure of a home

in her brother's house; and the two little boys would be brought up happily together. I am sorry, solely on Lady Charlotte's account, to have to record that her well-meant planning seemed to have no chances in its favour. In fact the probability that Eugenia might one day be a countess was strong; but, alas! the very opposite in Harriet's case.

Lord Woreham could not deny that Miss Aveley was beautiful—but—he thought her—too old!

“My dear Philip,” exclaimed Lady Charlotte, “what an idea! she is of a very suitable age for you—both Madame Lenoir and Miss Hester Downes are older than her.”

“But they certainly look younger,” he returned.

“That is because they are not so sensible as she is.”

“Yes—to tell you the truth, that is precisely what I object to,” he said with much

naiveté. "I am afraid she is clever." He had learnt that it was manly—it was a part of his college course perhaps—to have a horror of sense in a woman. He went on—"I have a detestation of learned women, you know. I think I have rather been confirmed in it too, Charlotte, by Lord Hoodborough's marriage; which is, you must confess, rather unfortunate, or at least disagreeable."

"But I should say," Lady Charlotte replied, "that no one can less desire or deserve the character of learned than Miss Aveley—she knows little of any other language than her own—has never been a student—has not read even as much as I—and you know I do not look upon myself as a reader."

"But only recollect with what seriousness she spoke of India the other day, and what strange things she related. I had never heard from any one such things."

"Perhaps not—yet she only said what

feminine sensibility dictated. Her understanding has been enlarged by intercourse with men of intelligence; and that I look upon as infinitely better than mere book-learning," said Lady Charlotte.

"Yes, very probably," he replied; "but you yourself remarked, after she had gone away, that she had quite a philosophic turn of mind."

"And you think you should not like a philosopher for a wife," answered she, laughing. "Do not be afraid of that. I can assure you she has no philosophy which she has not acquired through her affections. She is a true woman—her heart rules her head, but both are excellent, and have not been perverted by the world." Lady Charlotte sighed. Her brother, if the truth must be told, felt disposed to yawn. "Well, Philip," she added, "I give it up. I will acknowledge that Miss Aveley is too good for you, and I shall not ask you to admire her any

more. Let us speak of your going to town—I think you are deferring it too long. I shall not go, decidedly. I still feel Anne's loss too deeply to take any pleasure in society. Besides your boy will be better in the country, he is so happy now with his little cousin."

"Well, I think I shall go to town; but it will be only for a few weeks. I should be much better pleased, my dear Charlotte, if you were going with me."

"Thank you," his sister replied affectionately. "You are always kind. I am getting old, however, and find it suits me best to rust here with my villagers. Will you go with me now and bid them good-bye before your departure?"

He gladly consented to accompany her, and it was on this occasion that they presented themselves in John Hardy's garden. And now the earl has been conducted through every part of it, has admired it all, and has

returned to the spot where the ladies are seated.

Seated in the full enjoyment of the dearest of feminine pleasures—a careless interchange of feelings, fancies, thoughts. Harriet had never believed in the cold degrading doctrine of woman's incapability of friendship. On the contrary, so warm was her faith in what woman might be to woman, that her own position, which had never permitted her hitherto to have a female friend, seemed to her unnatural ; to have robbed her of many aids to improvement and of much happiness. At length she possesses two friends who unite all that she most admires and loves. Lady Charlotte's dignity and prudence won her respect ; Eugenia's simplicity and humility, her tenderness ; whilst dearer and nobler qualities in both secured her affection. To her then the happy garden was not made less happy by the addition to their party.

And surely this is also Eugenia's case?

My lord is talking to her with an animation and a fluency which ought to delight her. She smiles, if not delightedly at least good-humouredly, and he is satisfied. They talk—Lady Charlotte and Harriet talk—the three children play—John Hardy watches them and is still, the happiest of the happy. So darkness steals upon them whilst they forget that time is passing and they must separate. “Good night” must be said.

CHAPTER XVII.

“O hateful error, melancholy’s child,
Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men
The things that are not? O error soon conceived,
Thou never com’st unto a happy birth,
But killed the mother that engendered thee.”

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Harriet on her return to the village, learnt that the Marchioness of Hoodborough was still the occupant of Downes House, and even more of an invalid than formerly, she proposed, unmindful of ceremony, to call on her. She remembered that Lady Hoodborough had shewn her some attention, and for this she felt grateful;

besides, she admired her ladyship's great acquirements, and desired her society for the advantage of her conversation. She thought that in her position, to wait now for a formal visit from the marchioness, would be putting herself absurdly on a level with her, and that good taste, as well as good feeling, dictated that she should make enquiries respecting her health, without regard to the etiquette of the matter.

She mentioned this to Lady Charlotte, and was surprised to find her opinion the very reverse; and she insisted so much on Lady Hoodborough's cold character and ceremonious manners, that Harriet submitted to her better knowledge of polite life, and abandoned her design. Lady Charlotte informed the marchioness of what had occurred, and was soon satisfied that she had given Miss Aveley the best advice, and spared her good feelings some pain.

"I am sorry," said Lady Hoodborough,

“to seem to swerve from those principles of strict justice which govern my conduct at all times ; but there is a justice which is due to one’s self, as well as that to others ; I feel that my health demands from me now an apparent sacrifice of my consistency. Miss Aveley has been, though unintentionally on her part, a cause of much disturbance of mind to me ; I could not see her again without having painful subjects revived in my thoughts, and the effect on me might be injurious. I must, therefore, at the risk of appearing unjust to Miss Aveley, decline seeing her.”

Lady Charlotte prudently abstained from reminding her that she had herself alone to blame for her disturbance of mind, and for all that was painful connected with Harriet. And it was well she so abstained, for the marchioness went on—

“I almost forget, now, how it was that I first saw Miss Aveley. Was it not you,

Lady Charlotte, who induced me to visit her, after you knew that Lord Hoodborough had spoken of her?"

Yes, with inward shame and grief, Lady Charlotte remembered the time when the power of her former lover over her heart was revealed to her, not by sorrow for his joyless, loveless marriage, but by jealousy. Her suspicions respecting him—suspicions which, however, passed away from the first moment of seeing Harriet—had been very different from those of the marchioness. But her reply to the question now put to her, was simply that her admiration for Miss Avey had led her to entreat Lady Hoodborough to pay her some attentions, and she deeply regretted that what had been well meant, should have caused so much unhappiness.

The marchioness assured her that it was of little consequence; the marquis's conduct would always have been the same, and

the recognition of this relative, his niece, could never have been agreeable to her. For, after all, she had been obliged to give credence to that which she had so determinedly declared a fiction. After a stormy scene with her convalescent lord, who forced her to look at the documents which he laid before her, he had left her and returned to town.

The ladies were silent for a few minutes, mentally going over old remembrances. At length the marchioness said, "I suppose Lord Hoodborough will send immediately for Miss Aveley to town?"

"I do not know; I have not made any communication to her on the subject of the relationship; but, as he requested it, I informed him lately that she was again among us. I rather imagine that Miss Aveley will not consent to go to town. She loves the child so much—the old man with whom she lives is so dear to her, that she will not

separate from them whilst she can avoid it, I am certain."

"O my dear Lady Charlotte!" replied Lady Hoodborough, "we live no longer in the Arcadian times when gardens and fields, a cottage and a lover—much less a child and an old man—can make young ladies resign rank, and fashion, and the gaities of the capital."

"Well, my impression is that she will not go, and that you will have a visit from the marquis, if not on your own account, on hers." Lady Hoodborough's brow darkened, yet her friend was not deterred from adding, "May I remind you of what I said to you once, entreating you to allow your more generous feelings to guide you? In one respect towards Lord Hoodborough you were unjust."

"Unjust!" she repeated, whilst blacker grew that cloud on her brow. But remembering that Lady Charlotte knew nothing of

the parting scene between her husband and herself, she subdued the mingled feeling of hatred and anger which had given such bitterness to her tone; and, after a short interval of silence, merely said in her unmoved voice, "I do not think Lord Hoodborough will come here, nor can I believe that Miss Aveley will refuse to accede to any wish that he may express." She then quickly, yet with some constraint of manner, changed the subject.

Lady Charlotte felt again that she had touched the verge of that freedom which her intimacy with Lady Hoodborough permitted; that to advance a hair's breadth farther must separate them for ever. She spoke only of indifferent matters during the remainder of her visit.

Now the marchioness under her liberality hid as large a share of pride as falls to the lot of aristocrats who do not profess liberality; she, therefore, over-estimated what

Harriet was to gain by being recognised as the marquis's niece. This pride also made her anger more deep and lasting than her husband's ; and thus, logical as she was, she drew two false conclusions. After their last stormy encounter, when he departed, she said to herself, " This separation will be an eternal one."

It was, however, a separation on which the law had nothing to say ; that being the case, the marquis had also nothing to say, and the word " eternal " never entered his head. He thought they might, as before, be now and then under the same roof seeing as little as possible of each other ; but if absolutely necessary sitting sometimes at the same dinner-table. Thus, when he heard that Miss Aveley had returned, it seemed to him a mere matter-of-course, to set out as soon as circumstances permitted to meet her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ La gola e 'l sonno e l'oziose pinne
Hanno del mondo ogni virtù sbandita ;
Ond 'è dal corso suo quasi smarrita
Nostra natura, vinta dal costume.

Povera e nuda vai, filosofia,
Dice la turba al vil guadagno intesa,
Pochi compagni avrai pe l'alta via,
Tanto ti prego più, gentile spirto,
Non lassar la magnanima tua impresa.”

PETRARCA.

EARLY, then, in June, a few days after Lady Charlotte's conversation with Lady Hoodborough, the marquis dashed through the village one evening, with a grander equipage and a larger retinue than he had

ever brought before, and broke in very unexpectedly on the valetudinarian stillness of Downes House. He had the good taste, however, not to take all his splendour to John Hardy's abode, to which he proceeded after a very short delay.

Vainer, more selfish, though less self-occupied than his wife; having quicker sensibility, but less passion, than ever, he was more apt to experience emotion and to betray it. He appeared, then, at first agitated in Harriet's presence; whilst she, calm and happy,—for she had that day had a letter from Gordon—was unmoved on seeing him by any unusual feelings of expectation, or hope, or joy. That was disappointing. He had persuaded himself that he was the bringer of tidings so excellent, that they might be almost gathered from his looks.

Alas ! for the dreams and schemes of man !—as I have had reason to exclaim before—when the tidings were told; when

he saw how great was Harriet's surprise ; he was still disappointed. There was not the burst of gladness which he had anticipated ; and when he drew near her to give her an embrace of " kin and kind," she could not refrain her tears, they flowed impetuously. She " wept afresh her long-since cancelled woe"—her uncle's loss—with a sharpness of regret which she had never felt before.

The marquis's sensibility being of the selfish sort, which abhors beholding suffering, or even hearing of it, he was shocked by this grief which defied control. In addition to that, his pride was hurt, and, wounded and displeased, he turned to a window to give her time to recover her composure. Her heart soon suggested that she had yielded thoughtlessly to her own feelings, when what was meant for kindness was offered her. She hastily dried her eyes, and followed Lord Hoodborough to the spot from which he had the satisfaction of gazing

on Downes House, and thinking how very agreeable it might be to his wife to know the nature of the reception he had met with from Miss Aveley.

She stole up to him, took his hand, and offered her cheek, saying, "Forgive me; but the name of uncle recalls so much that is dear and sad, that I was overcome by it."

He was charmed by her sweetness and frankness. He replied in the best style, said the best things that could be said on her love for Charles Aveley; on his respect for his memory, and on his desire to fill for her the place which he had left vacant as a guardian and a relative. And, now, was it not to be expected that he should suggest, though in a way so delicate that it could not offend, that he had it in his power to bestow more amply than Colonel Aveley had done, what was due to her merits, and to her close connexion with both Lord Woreham's

family and her own? He did this; but did it so well, that it was complimentary to Colonel's Aveley's memory, to her, and to himself at the same time. He could not help playing the *grand seigneur* a little—a very little, just to make himself rightly appreciated by his newly-found, simple-minded relative.

When he had ended, she spoke again. It was merely to thank him, and to say that she needed nothing; she had a small fortune sufficient for her personal wants, and had a happy home with one of the best of men, Mr. Hardy.

“Ah,” he replied, smilingly, at her ingenuousness, “this is the talk of youthful romance! You know that you no longer belong to Mr. Hardy's rank; you must prepare to take your place in a different sphere. We can readily make some compensation to Mr. Hardy for his kindness to you.”

It was now Harriet's turn to be shocked and wounded. "Compensation!" — she could not repeat that word. "But you do not know all that he has done for me," was her only reply.

"Oh, yes! He is truly good and kind, I know. He told me all—about his building this house solely for you, that you might have a home in England after his death. It was a charming trait!"

"He was too generous," she answered in a voice lower than usual, but firmer too, "to tell me that; he would not make my gratitude oppressive to me. Lord Hoodborough, I shall not leave him whilst I remain in England."

"I do not understand you; you cannot mean that you prefer Mr. Hardy to me?—the society here to that which I can introduce you?"

"Do not suppose that I compare them," she replied, "I only feel that every senti-

ment of gratitude and honour, binds me to one who has loved me so unselfishly, and to whose happiness I have yet contributed so little. You have many means of enjoyment, can be happy in the beneficial exercise of your influence over others. You will not miss me; and for the short time that I can remain with Mr. Hardy, I feel bound to do so."

His lordship did not choose to make any observation on the first part of her reply; he only took up the last clause, and asked what it meant.

"She blushed, she reddened like the rose," as the old song has it, but answered, "I am engaged to be married. In the course of the ensuing year, I shall be so, I believe."

"Indeed? But let me remind you, Miss Aveley, that your circumstances are now so much altered, by being recognized as my relative, that an engagement made without my sanction should not be held binding."

"Were I guided solely by my own affection, in this matter," she said, "I am old enough to know that I ought to intrust my judgment ; but I am directed by my uncle's choice."

"The gentleman is an officer, perhaps, who had served with Colonel Aveley?"

"No; he is engaged in commercial life, and is now at Smyrna."

This information was followed by another "Indeed?" of surprise, almost anger, from the marquis's lips. After a pause, he resumed the conversation with an assumed coolness, which ill. concealed the irritation of his pride.

He had not supposed, he said, that it would be necessary to bribe Miss Aveley to accept the countenance, the protection, he might add, the affection of her only relative, one willing to stand in the position of a father towards her. He had hoped that what was freely, unconditionally offered,

would be so accepted; but since that was not the case, he would inform her what were his intentions with regard to her.

She interrupted him to declare that this was unnecessary; that all she desired was his affection; she should accept it gratefully and return it warmly. She could not add, as a daughter; that would be to acknowledge in him privileges of counsel and guidance, to which it was no longer in her power to submit.

He waived all reply to this, and proceeded to state what he thought due to himself, which was, that as his niece he desired to place her in the society to which he belonged; that he would give her as large a fortune as he possibly could, and that he hoped she would form a marriage which would establish her family in her mother's rank.

Harriet did not wish to appear ungracious; she repeated to herself the words, "My

mother's brother," as if by them she could awaken some kindlier feeling in her heart for the marquis. It would not do. In all that he said, there was too much of that which makes

"Benefits, bonds to tie the taker
To the imperious will of him that gives.
There's none but slaves receive such courtesies,
Since they must fetter us to our dishonours."

She felt that, in his eyes, her love for Gordon, her affection for little Charles, her gratitude to John Hardy, were as nothing in comparison with the rank which he offered her, the position in which he would place her. She sighed regretfully, for it was painful to her to lose a friend, a relative.

He thought that she was touched by his representation of what she might be, could she but get released from her engagement; and he proceeded in a softer tone and manner to ask, what she had to expect in lieu of that which it was his wish to bestow on her?

Her sigh was succeeded by a smile, as she answered, "Only happiness with an honourable, a noble minded man. A happiness which I am not so romantic as not to know, may be often troubled by narrow fortune—but I am not afraid."

"And you cannot be turned away from this absurd, this childish attachment?"

"Oh, no!—Forgive me!"

"Nor from your wish to remain dependent on Mr. Hardy's bounty?"

"No!—Never whilst dependence is so sweet, so enobled by the generous nature of him who gives."

"She meant but to express truly her sentiments with regard to John Hardy, but the marquis felt her words as conveying some reproach to him. According to his wont with the marchioness, he became more cold and supercilious, the more indignant he was; and rising, he begged that Miss Aveley, when her necessities might be urgent, would

have the goodness to apply to him, recollecting that as a relative he felt bound to assist her. Then, he asked if he might be allowed to leave her a cheque at the present time.

Ah, she remembered John Hardy's fifty-pound note slipped under the papers on her table, when she stood alone in the world ! So touching a remembrance enabled her to bear the marquis's insult with humility. "I am sorry to have offended you," she said, rising with dignity to offer her hand, as she saw he was preparing to take leave. "I must judge for myself in that which seems to me to concern my own honour."

He bowed haughtily, and departed.

At an early hour on the following morning, I saw his splendid equipage pass through the village ; thus, arriving after dinner and leaving before it, the disagreeableness of sitting at the same table with his wife was

avoided. His visit was rather shorter, and quite as unsatisfactory, as that of my hero Benjamin had been.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ Providence, or chance, or fatal sway,
 Comes with resistless force and finds, or makes a way.
 Nor kings, nor nations, nor united power,
 One moment can retard the appointed hour.
 And some one day, some wondrous chance appears,
 Which happened not in centuries of years.”

DRYDEN.

ALTHOUGH entering on “ the golden age ”
 of my history, I do not choose for it that
 pagan title ; it is unsuitable—because we
 are all Christians and many of us saints.
 I remember too the immortal Don holding
 the handful of acorns, and making his
 eloquent oration to the goatherds, and, (those

boundaries, John Hardy's hedge-rows, being passed,) I find nothing that corresponds to the great knight-errant's description.

Besides, however much I might have been disposed to remain in his garden, and make a golden age, I could not do it. There was our village eager to have its millennium, its reign of virtue and contentment, chronicled. Every one agreed before it came, that it was to be one of connubial bliss. We were to have a succession of weddings, commencing with Lord Woreham, and ending with Carver, his chief butler; and in the matrimonial crisis which was reached, even my hero, Hardy, was to find a wife,—even he, who has been so lately in a state which made old bachelorhood his most probable destiny. Well, he does find a wife! There is a matrimonial crisis approaching, but I must have time, for I have to speak of something still more important.

The reign of felicity concerned not my

village alone, it concerned England. It came some twenty years ago, when every man, woman, and child, was to be made rich. Of course, all being rich, all were to be happy, and the long predicted millennium had begun—begun in Liverpool. Yes, we saw then, the period of which the poet speaks, when,

“Some one day, some wondrous chance appears,
Which happened not in centuries of years.”

In all the centuries of years which had gone before, railways were not; and then, they were. This point being reached, my man of “the unconquerable will, and courage, never to submit or yield,” discovered that what he had planned for himself, might be accomplished with much less labour, and in much less time, than he had dared to anticipate a few years before.

The vein of traffic which, after his failure he began to work,—*exploiter* in the French

phrase,—turned out well, as I have said. But he saw that all his countrymen were going to do something more than well, and he had certainly adopted no principle which forbade him to participate in the general prosperity. He did participate in it largely. Yet, at the moment when his good fortune became known, never did any one look so little like the child of success.

The coldness of his demeanour, however, and the absence of all elation of manner in him, caused his reputation to rise amazingly. We have taught ourselves, (whether wisely or not, I cannot say,) to admire the man who smothers the natural and graceful expression of those emotions of grief or of joy, with which, his Maker in giving him a soul meant that it should be touched. But Hardy's want of elation in his success was not known. It was taken for the gravity of a mind occupied by great speculations, and won him much respect.

He, being now a rich man acknowledged, found that he had advanced a grade in society; and he had thereupon matter for serious reflection. From the thoroughly British dinner he had progressed, to that at which a dish with a French name, was now and then discussed; other wines besides the staunch potations of Spain and Portugal were drunk; and the servants were of the male, not the female sex. Beyond this, the social intercourse seemed much the same; the conversation neither better nor worse.

And to make this kind of advance, he said to himself, he had struggled against himself to give up heart and soul, love and life! For this, he was to be looked up to as the most respected of men! Was the gain worth the cost? No! he boldly answered, if what he then had gained were to be the be-all and the end-all of his toil. But Hardy would not have thus answered had he not had a glimpse of his uncle's Eden,

from which he was expelled by the flaming sword pointing every way—the sword within his bosom. There in John Hardy's garden, was all that the human heart could desire—and there was *not* that on which he had had his heart set.

Well, and in this state of feeling, after his sad expedition to the village, what did he do? He resisted the melancholy fiend—stirred up all the soul within him—went on stoically adding thousand unto thousand—and determined to wait before he decided what he should do.

At length, he mastered himself sufficiently to resolve not to be shut out from witnessing the happiness which he could not partake. He became a letter writer. He wrote to his uncle; he wrote to Eugene; he wrote to Miss Aveley. He had replies full of gladness at being remembered—full of affection—full of pleasant things. And then, he wrote to Gordon. Seeking now to live in

the interest of others, and to forget himself, his letter had more of the genuine expression of friendship than any that he had before written to him, to whom alone he had given the name of friend.

And then there came a time when he wrote to Eugenia. His epistle was unstudied as that to Gordon; but it was calmer, colder in its tone. He spoke of his business engagements having caused his visit to the village to be hurried; proposed going thither again for a little longer stay; and, also for another purpose,—this was, as it was then, Eugene's holiday time, to bring him to Liverpool to spend a few weeks.

Poor Eugenia! Who shall tell with what feelings she again held a letter from Hardy in her hand? Did she not think of that time when day after day, hour after hour, minute after minute, the hope of seeing once more, his written words, ever balked, was ever renewed, till life seemed but a long

agony of dying? Yes, she must have thought of that sad time, but happily, she dared not give way to the recollection, and dwell on it.

Harriet was by her side. She, on receiving a letter from Benjamin, had immediately in reply, filled a sheet with a description of the summer life they were leading—a very midsummer dream of delight it was meant to be, to cheer him in his dull mercantile existence. This being the case, Eugenia must not appear prudishly to hesitate about writing to him; yet, it was with a trembling hand she took up her pen.

She thanked Hardy for his proposal with regard to her son, and gladly accepted it. Her letter contained little else. She could have wished to say something more; but all beyond the mere business purpose of writing, seemed to her a claim on him for a continuance of the correspondence, and for a renewal of old *friendship*; and from this, she

shrank. I believe, nay, I feel assured, that had Hardy's letter been one of returning love, she would have replied to it in that spirit which animated her when she told his uncle that she could never be his wife. She would have said, "seek a worthier than me." And yet—ay, that, *and yet!*—the calmness and coldness of his most kind letter pained her.

She would have answered as I have said, his returning love; but I cannot deny that it would have soothed her humbled spirit, to have had it in her power so to have answered—to have had her firmness against herself so tried. She was far from suspecting how Benjamin's firmness had been tried in his interview with her. Had she known it, her gentle heart would have felt pained for him rather than for herself. As it was, she quickly forgot what hurt her in his letter, condemned herself, and replaced him in his former position in her esteem.

But he comes again to the village. It is however, with a prepared spirit, and he can meet his two lovely friends—or foes,—with less of the aspect of one most weak, most guilty. This was well. It was well for him too, that arriving in the evening—one bright and warm, with the full flush of summer—his uncle's family were in the garden, and Lady Charlotte and the viscount with them. There was less formality in meeting thus in the open air, and in the midst of the children's sports. Besides, before her ladyship, the first lady of title with whom he had come into contact, he had to assume a bolder countenance that he might not appear a booby, awe struck by rank.

He was far from being without interest in Lady Charlotte's eyes. She regarded him attentively, first, on his uncle's account—next, on his own; when she had made the acknowledgement to herself, that both his

figure and face were distinguished; and lastly, because it began to be rumoured, even in the village, that he had made a great fortune. She saw him indeed, at a favourable moment, excited as he was on meeting with Harriet and Eugenia—meeting them with happier feelings, in some degree, than on his late visit.

After cordial greetings with his uncle; after due enquiries respecting the health of the ladies; after a little play with the children, the conversation became chiefly Lady Charlotte's affair and his. Without appearing to question him, she did so admirably. She drew him out, in the common phrase, but it was not in a common way; and she made him discover in himself, as it were, powers which he had hardly dreamed he possessed.

Harriet, as she listened, yielded to sadly pleasing remembrances. All this brought back old times, when Benjamin—then too

under the influence of an older mind, one more experienced in the world than his own, her father's—showed an intellectual superiority, which he seemed afterwards to have lost in his aspirations to be great solely by wealth. For Eugenia, her eyes lighted up with pride, catching, as they did now and then, a glance from John Hardy's, which told his gratification in his nephew's approval by so accomplished a person as Lady Charlotte. Yes, John and Eugenia understood one another in their generous, forgiving affection for Benjamin, and they turned each to the other for sympathy.

All parties were pleased. The evening was an agreeable one; there was a kind of sober happiness in it which was good. Still when Hardy once more laid his head on his pillow in Kitty's mansion he sighed heavily—when sleep came it was that of the hopeless.

He passed only a few days with his

friends, and, promising soon to steal a week from business, returned to Liverpool accompanied by the joyous Eugene. Happy, most happy, was the boy in his visit. It was improving for him also, being such a page of education in the practical and useful as he could not have had placed before him under his mother's tender care. Seeing how much he enjoyed his stay, Hardy prolonged it, and it was therefore late in the autumn when, after having been frequently summoned back to the village, they set out for it.

And now the country as he went on presented precisely that aspect of nature which he had seen so many years before. As he thinks of that setting out in life, a longing to tread back the path of time, to be again in his boyhood, seizes on him and makes him turn sick at heart. To banish this feeling he tries to recal those incidents of his journey which had amused him. He had for companions, he remembers, two

religious disputants; but that which had seemed absurd before cannot now bring a smile to his lip. No. Instead of seeing only the ludicrous in the discussion of that time, he plunges gloomily into the chaotic darkness of their old controversy in argument with himself on "fixed fate, free-will, fore-knowledge."

To employ the words of Coleridge, "his free agency was a fact made fearfully significant to him by his prophetic conscience." Yet, as he tried to disentangle some truth which the understanding might grasp, he almost started to find that he was about to embrace the doctrine of the predestinarian.

Perhaps association of ideas had more to do with this than reasoning. Time and place could not but bring back the man with whom he also travelled on his first journey, and who was afterwards his partner. Then came the recollection of all that followed. In reality all that followed depended more on

what was passing in his own mind than on any invincible power in the linking together of the events of life. The eager purpose in his soul made him the dupe of himself only ; yet now he could almost believe that he had been impelled by fate.

He was at the goal, however, after all that had happened ! The race for fortune was won ! And was he not as much disturbed by passion as when he first started in the race ? Yes. Impatient to direct his own destiny, he had not perceived that man is only left one realm in which to rule—his mind ; one realm in which he must be free, or must cease to be the being he is—must cease to be man. Hardy had looked for freedom elsewhere—and, finding it not, was sad and thoughtful.

Let us pity him. The strange way in which disappointment and shame, wearing the sweet faces of Harriet and Eugenia, met him, just when he had obtained the object of

his early ambition, might well humble him.

But once again under the influence of his uncle's genial smile his melancholy is lessened. He asks himself, might he not, in the affection of the excellent old man, find what would be as good as the love of woman—peace with himself? But the restless heart refuses to believe that peace is all sufficient—it craves for something more.

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CHAPTER XX.

“ False praise can charm, unreal shame control,
Whom but a vicious, or a sickly soul ? ”

HORACE.

(*Francis's Translation.*)

HARDY continued his visits to the village ; coming and going whilst the year went its round and brought back May. With it came many a thought of his last spring's hopes and of their withering in the bud. The recollection was depressing ; he felt it more than usually so, one morning after returning to Liverpool, as he sat at his solitary breakfast. He expected to learn that day, too,

the arrival of young Bismark, who was returning from the West Indies. He was not then surprised on hearing a loud knock from a bold, impatient hand at the hall-door ; but on its being opened he was surprised to hear that the stairs which led to his apartment were cleared by some one at two or three bounds.

In an instant the door of his room was flung open, and Gordon and he stood once more face to face. Certainly the Highlander looked as if the shirt of the happy man had been found at last and was worn by him ; and, as certainly, the Englishman, as if the shirt of Nessus were upon him for the first minutes of their meeting. But even whilst he winced under his pangs, he acknowledged that he had no right to be jealous ; justice did what generosity could not do—it enabled him to bear the delight which beamed in his friend's eyes and glowed on his cheeks.

“The surprise of seeing me is quite a

shock to you, Hardy," said Gordon, when he observed that Benjamin, though he had risen from his chair, stood still, grasping the back of it as if for support, whilst his paleness and his compressed lips indicated that he was far from well. "My dear fellow, you have been working too hard—you have made yourself ill," he added, when at length his hearty shake of Hardy's hand was over, and when holding him firmly he gazed on his features studying every line which had been impressed on them since they parted.

"No, no ; I am well enough, indeed, dear Gordon," replied Benjamin, struggling to release himself and turn away, "But you did startle me, because I was so far from expecting you, and I was expecting another person—a young man who is returning from the West Indies, Bismark, my landlady's son. But sit down—sit down to breakfast, and then we can talk."

"So you are with my good old friend,

Mrs. Bismark—that is right—quite right. But how the name recalls the old times of our servitude.”

“Ay, indeed! all, from the very beginning—for you know I stepped into Bismark’s place in the counting-house.”

“Yes,” returned Gordon, “and you have been true to the work you set yourself. You have done even better than you hoped to do when we separated. I could not name you during the half-hour I have been on shore without hearing, in reply, what a great, rich man you are.”

“Yes, I have done well; but I paid dearly for the experience which enabled me to do well. And you—what have you been doing—you, no longer a soldier?”

“I have been learning what a glorious world it is—and what glorious passions are given to man! Would that he did not distort them to false uses, till his heart, in putting forth its strong shoots in wrong

directions, becomes like "the unwedgeable and gnarled oak," and can be made to bend only by the fire from heaven! There's a poetical flourish you will say—but I am so happy I cannot help being poetical."

"Oh, don't try to prevent it," said Hardy, with a slight laugh—the laugh, however, ended in a sigh as he asked, "How long will you stay with me, Gordon?"

"On the present occasion only till to-morrow, but I shall soon visit you again. You guess, I know, in what direction I am going. You have been at your uncle's. She has told you all. You are so old a friend that, loving Mr. Hardy as a father, she would speak to you as a brother, I am sure."

"I have only been at my uncle's now and then for a very short time," Benjamin replied, "and, I think, my acquaintance with Miss Aveley has never been renewed on its old footing."

"Well, perhaps so; and perhaps when

you have been there you have been disposed to give your time to some other than Miss Aveley?"

"No, no; I assure you not."

"Ah, you know, women will gossip even in their letters," persisted Gordon, "and Harriet suspects that a certain fair widow, her dear friend, has—but I must be discreet—has—a very warm friendship for you."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Hardy, with a depth of emotion in his tone which astonished his friend.

"Then you have some attachment here?" he said.

"No—oh, no. What should I have to do with attachments? business is my mistress, you know."

"There is something in your eye which contradicts your words," returned Gordon. "But I do not insist on knowing more. Remember, however, what we promised each other when we separated. I am going to

keep my word to you this very evening. I have much on hand for the morning, but when all is settled, I mean to fix myself here, on this sofa, and tell my tale. If you choose, when I have done, to remain silent, you may do so, 'the heart of your mystery' shall be sacred to me, I will not pluck it out, it must be given freely."

After this, whilst finishing breakfast, the friends conversed on business matters principally. When they had done they went out together, and once more, arm in arm, walked through streets but too well known to them. They did not say much, for each was occupied by reflections on the strange change in their hopes and aspirations since last they thus walked together.

Their different affairs drew them asunder, and it was not until late in the evening that they met at Hardy's lodgings. Again they supped together as of old, only with much improved fare before them. But the supper

over, Angus stretched himself on a sofa and began his tale in words bold, clear, and animated, whilst, in an easy chair opposite to him, Hardy listened, silent and immoveable.

Immoveable, until at one incident he sprang from his seat, and with hasty steps paced the room. This was at the point when Gordon turned away from Harriet's offered hand, that he might merit it by choosing the steep and narrow—the obscure way to honour, rather than the broad one, conspicuous to men. He then went on.

“When after my separation from Miss Aveley, I reached Calcutta, I thought myself fortunate in meeting with Captain Tarleton. I was sure I had found a friend who would assist me in becoming honourably a free man. For, in truth, the soldier is merely a slave; but being voluntarily such, he has no right to liberty, except on the conditions to which he bound himself. I had calculated

wrongly with regard to him. What he called his sense of duty—of military honour—forbade him to assist me. And indeed, he so plainly intimated to me that he ought to look upon me as a deserter, that I almost felt as if I had no honourable course left, except that of giving myself up to the authorities. I meant to make known to them my whole case,—the kind of intermediate state in which I stood between soldier and officer, and I had no doubt that the influence of Colonel Aveley's name would have brought me through my difficulties.

“Happily I was saved from a step which would, at least, have been attended by the inconvenience of a long detention, a period of inaction, if not with ill results of a more serious nature. I fell into the hands of one who had a most wholesome dread of the Anglo-Indian government; this was Asaph Hussein, who, instead of sending a messenger in pursuit of me, came himself to

Calcutta. He proved a true friend to me, never ceasing from the first moment of his seeing me, to urge my immediate departure, laughing at all I told him of my intentions, as mere childish nonsense. Perhaps as one of the conquered race, and with feelings more than usually irritated, he entertained too much distrust of British equity in India. However that may be, he asserted that I was in a dangerous position, and that as my life was dear to Colonel Aveley, he would not permit me the exercise of my own judgment, but should provide for my safety himself.

“He lent me money; furnished me with letters from an Armenian merchant, to merchants at Surat, Aleppo, and Smyrna, and at last bade me farewell, with a hearty “God speed you!”

“Of what I learnt during my journey, and my residence with Easterns altogether, I shall not speak now; but, you are not to

suppose that with light spirits and a cheerful heart I set out on that journey. Far from it. Had I heard of Colonel's Aveley's death, I should have braved all consequences, and remained to see Miss Aveley after that sad event. Here, however, I should begin my "Arabian nights," for I commenced my mercantile transactions at Muscat. In that town I received through the Armenian in Calcutta, one thousand pounds sent me by a friend. With that I have done handsomely for myself as well as for my friend." There was something peculiar in the smile with which he said this; for, it was of Harriet's money that he was speaking; but Hardy did not question him, and he went on—"I have made so good an arrangement for three years in Smyrna, that I have come to England to be married, and to take out my wife for that period, at least. I feel that I may with safety take on me the charge of one whose happiness is, you can well believe,

much dearer to me than my own, In short, I have done so well that I may marry, whilst you, Hardy, have done too well to marry, it would seem. How is that? Have you really nothing to tell, but that you have been making money?"

"Oh, yes!" he replied quickly, "something more. You are to understand that I have not been always making money, for I first lost a great deal—lost all that my uncle had made by his life of industry."

"Ay? That was what you called paying dear for your experience."

"You speak lightly of it, but it was no light thing at the time, I assure you."

"Well, but you soon made it up to the old gentleman," returned Gordon; "and at this moment money against love has but a poor chance in my thoughts. So you will not make a clean breast, as I have done? You will leave me to think worse of you as long as I live, by allowing me to suppose

that you have been cold enough to keep off all attacks from the blind boy, in your pursuit of the blind dame, Fortune ? ”

“ And can you, Gordon, speak jestingly of love ? ”

“ Only when I speak as to the uninitiated ; prove that you are not that, and you will find me serious enough.”

There was a pause. At last Hardy began, and it was strange that it should be with this question,—“ Do you know that the beautiful widow, whom Miss Aveley named to you in her letters, is the very person about whom you wished me to make enquiries in Jamaica ? She was the wife of Sir Walcot Downes.”

Gordon was surprised at this piece of information ; but its being introduced thus, seemed to favour Miss Aveley’s suspicion that there was a secret attachment between Eugenia and Benjamin. There was some little discussion respecting the necessity for

the widow's asserting her claims while Gordon was in England; and then there was another pause.

And then Hardy's relation commenced. His words were not, indeed, like those of his friend, bold, clear, and animated; but he spoke with decision, if not with frankness—spoke with an unflinching resolution to be true. There was in his narrative a point at which Gordon—as Hardy had done during his—started from his seat, and strode up and down the apartment with his firm soldier's step, but not with a soldier's courage, for his head was bent down either by shame or regret. "And you left Jamaica without seeing her again!" was the exclamation that started to his lips,—yet he suppressed it, and continued silently to listen to the end. The great end which announced the entire accomplishment of Benjamin's ambitious desires.

Still when all was told, "the heart of his

mystery" was not told. That deadly thrill which the voices of Harriet and Eugenia heard together in the quiet May evening, sent through his frame was not mentioned—his love for Miss Aveley was not suspected by Gordon. He remained long without speaking, after his friend had concluded his tale; never had he felt so utterly at fault, as to what he should say. How could he now answer the question which he had put to his friend,—“Will you leave me to think worse of you as long as I live, by supposing that you have been too cold to give way to love?” He knew now that he had loved, and should he think worse or better of him than before?

But Hardy himself forced an answer to this question—“Gordon, you are condemning me,” he said hurriedly; and then, with a tone almost of anguish, “must I lose my friend too?”

“No, no!” exclaimed the other, starting

up and seizing his hand, "you have not lost—you cannot lose your friend. What have I to do with condemnation!—of that you have heard enough in your own bosom." And his feelings thus turned in the right direction, he spoke with warmth and from his heart.

This was cheering to Benjamin, whose spirits were exhausted by the effort to overcome the reserve and pride which his confession cost him. The long and sober communion of that night, left to the friends only a couple of hours' sleep after it. In the morning they met again at breakfast with the cordial greetings of men, whose trust in each other was for life.

A couple of evenings afterwards, as I was returning from a walk, in going down the hill from John Hardy's, I encountered a gentleman, altogether a stranger to our village, going up it. It was, as I have said, a pretty good pull for some persons, but he

"Right up Ben Lomond's side could press,
And not a sob the toil confess."

Indeed, at the moment, I rather think he did not know he was mounting a hill. I am quite sure he did not know that I passed him, though I almost touched him; and, being much struck by his tall figure, his handsome face, and something dauntless in his air and carriage, I looked very narrowly at him.

He was Angus Gordon, as I soon learned. But how, in a few minutes after he passed me, he was received in John Hardy's, by Harriet Aveley, I dare not tell. I must not, with my pert Asmodeus peepings, intrude on such a meeting.

CHAPTER XXI.

“And all went merry as a marriage bell.”

BYRON.

GORDON had come to remain in England six months, and they were to be employed for the greater part actively in business. He, therefore, after having staid a few days, disappeared from amongst us ; but was afterwards seen on occasional visits like those which Hardy had been paying us, only that they were more frequent than his. As he also continued his former practice of coming and going as inclination directed, it was thought strange that the two were never in

our village at the same time. I suspect that Benjamin had not acquired the courage to be a witness of his friend's happiness.

In the meantime, one of the first pieces of intelligence which caused some excitement in our community was, that the supposed Frenchwoman was no other than the widow of the late Sir Walcot Downes; her boy—the companion of the better sort of the village lads—a real young baronet, Sir Walcot Eugene Downes.

The settlement of this affair was brought about without the intervention of the lawyers in a public manner. Mr. Gordon and her friends accomplished it all in a quiet and satisfactory way. General Downes had never taken legal possession of his nephew's encumbered estate, and about this period the news of his death reached us. He died in India, unmarried, and left a pretty fortune to each of his nieces. Sir Walcot's property would then have passed to a distant relative,

but there was so clearly laid before him the certainty of establishing the claims of Eugenia's son, that he gave up his own claims.

The unexpected tidings made our school-boys stare at Eugene, to whom they turned with the abrupt question, "What, does that grand house where the marchioness lives belong to you?"

He, poor fellow, ashamed at being so much greater than they, answered, with blushing cheeks, "Oh, yes! but I don't care about it. I had rather live with Mr. Hardy than in it—my mother says so too."

"Your mother is Lady Downes now?"

"Yes."

At this there is a solemn silence of wonderment, till he cries out, "Come, lads! let's set to our game!"

In the commencement they play with too much respect for him; but by degrees this wears away, and he is as happy as he was

before. Yet, on the day of the announcement of his greatness, he had a much larger escort home, and a more subservient one than he had ever had until then. Will our young West Indian, being taught thus early a little of Timon's sorry lore, preserve his generous temper uncontaminated? Yes—if fate have in store for him a good guardian and guide.

The commotion and talk were excessive among our schoolboys; but it is not to be supposed that on the subject of Lady Downes, and that of the new Sir Walcot, the commotion and talk were confined to our young ones. We may find the older personages as much excited as they. Imagine Kitty and Will Diggins holding their private discussion on the engrossing topic; and then the former issuing forth to make known to all her dear friends how she always knew—that was guessed—what everybody now knew. But, of course, if she suspected the truth, it was

not for her to tell it when she saw that it was wished to be kept secret. But could not anybody tell that her former lodger was a great lady, so mild and humble as she was, like all great ladies, and she thought she ought to know what ladies are, having lived at the castle.

And then to the castle she proceeded, where, as an old denizen of the servants' hall, she had a private entrée. There certainly was felt by the great personages of that hall some degree of curiosity, but it was not so great as she had anticipated. Had she, however, been able to peep into the drawing-room she would have been amply rewarded for the defeat of her hopes. There the intelligenc that the so-named Madame Lenoir was really Lady Downes had indeed created a sensation—and it was in Lord Woreham's bosom. He had just returned from town, and this, the first news which he learnt, charmed him in

the highest degree. He formed a decision on it instantly, and, walking up and down the room in much excitement, he informed Lady Charlotte what it was.

In vain the prudent sister counselled delay—further inquiry—further knowledge. No—he was more prudent than she. He would at once make proposals to the widow. Lady Downes. He had long been in love with her—he never, at any period of his life, felt more in love than at that moment. He once made a jesting kind of promise that if he married a second time it should be a Downes. Now he should keep his word! And why further knowledge? His sister herself, who had heard all the particulars of the affair from Miss Aveley, granted that there was no doubt of its truth. Why further delay? Delays were dangerous. Some one would make proposals to Lady Downes, that was certain. There was young Mr. Hardy, now very often at his uncle's, nothing

more probable than that he should try to win her affections.

Lady Charlotte here began to yield, her brother's impetuosity overcame her; in short he left her that very hour in order to fulfil his intentions—and—and—two hours after, he set out again for town, the blackest disappointment depicted on his face. Never had he shown his sister, his son, his servants, so much ill-humour as in the interval, not a long one, between a visit to Eugenia and his departure.

This does not look as if all was going "merry as a marriage bell" with us. Patience, only for three weeks, and the village is merry as a marriage bell—for a marriage bell is actually ringing! The earl is married—the news has arrived from London; rejoicings have commenced; Hester has won the prize of perseverance!

She had been informed when the necessary steps for the recognition of the young ba-

ronet's rights were taken, but she indignantly refused to believe that *the foreigner at John Hardy's* was her brother's widow. Soon after she left the village in disgust, and repaired to town. Here the fair Hester, weary of her false and fickle lover, determined, with her former charms and her recent fortune, to dispose of herself even to a man without a title.

This high-spirited resolve was just taken when the earl, angry at his summary dismissal by Eugenia, encountered her in London. They were in an admirable frame of mind for becoming excellent friends, and he was free from Lady Charlotte's trammels. The wedding was celebrated as speedily as possible, but rather quietly—we had all the gaiety in the country.

All the gaiety there? One heart in the castle, whilst the feast and the carouse were going on, was not gay. Poor Lady Charlotte heard in the marriage bell the knell of her

independence ! She had a home no longer beneath the paternal, the ancestral roof.

“ This is not a king’s palace, but a caravanserai,” said the dervish to the Eastern monarch, when told of the rapid succession of sovereigns who had inhabited it. So the castle of the noble is too often but a boarding-house for a short term, to mothers, daughters, and younger sons ; their period of stay not being, like that of the dwellers in the royal caravanserai, continued until death ends it.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ With him went Hope in ranke, a handsome mayd,
 Of cheerful looke and lovely to behold ;
 She always smiled, and in her hand did hold
 An holy-water-sprinckle, dipt in dew,
 With which she sprinckled favours manifold,
 On whom she list, and did great liking shew,
 Great liking unto many, but true love to few.”

SPENSER.

BITTERLY did Lady Charlotte feel that she had no longer a home, as she recalled how her father in his anxious care for the estate rather than for his children, had left to her sister and herself only an income of a few hundreds a year, and that not in their power to dispose of by will. “ A home no more !”

she repeated to herself; for a home, with Hester Downes as lady paramount in it, was not to be thought of.

In the midst of her reflections, now and then disturbed by the rejoicings in and around the castle, she was roused by a nearer sound—a rather nervous tap at the door of the room. Her command to enter was obeyed by the long-established and very steady housekeeper, with something a little like confusion in her countenance. Without much preamble she announced that, as she should soon be no longer under her ladyship's orders, she wished to resign her situation. It would be too painful to her, she said, to serve any other lady; she had therefore decided on uniting herself to one who had been long and firmly attached to her.

"You think of marrying, then?" asked Lady Charlotte, with much surprise.—
"Whom, pray?"

"Mr. Carver, my lady."

"Is not this rather sudden?"

"Certainly, my lady; my feelings in discovering that I shall be no longer under your ladyship's service, have caused me to decide at last."

"But I have heard you sometimes complain of Carver, as inclined to take too much wine."

"He is quite an altered character lately, I assure you, my lady."

"I am glad to hear it. And what do you think of doing?"

"Of taking a house in town and letting apartments; we have one in view, my lady, in a delightful street, suitable for any person of the highest rank. If your ladyship should ever want accommodation in town, you must know how glad I should be to serve you—in remembrance of old times, my lady; there never was a lady"—and here the house-keeper took out her pocket-handkerchief to

wipe her eyes, her words quite dying away. It was best so, for her diplomacy failed her in deciding whether "a lady more beloved" was too familiar, "more respected" too cold, or "more admired" not warm enough.

"I am much obliged to you," said Lady Charlotte, with condescending dignity; "I shall not forget to serve you in your new mode of life, if I can recommend any one to you."

The housekeeper perceived that she had gone far enough, and retired.

"Yes," said Lady Charlotte, when once more alone; "yes, I the houseless, am already the theme of discussion among domestics!—and I am offered a home by my housekeeper!" Then she remembered some titled spinsters whom she knew, living solitary and humble in their dull apartments in London; and she was more moved by the picture which the housekeeper's suggestion had brought before her, than she often per-

mitted herself to be. She might have given way to something like passion, for nature was strong within her, but that she was again called from her reflections by a gentle tap. This time it was not at the door, but the window. Turning quickly round, she beheld a face which was, to use Cervantes' phrase, a blessing to all. To her, at that moment, doubly, trebly a blessing—the smiling face of Harriet Aveley. She held by the hand the little Charles, an angel of peace to his disturbed aunt.

The window opened to the ground, and quickly did Lady Charlotte admit the dear visitors. It was, *par parenthèse*, that very window which had admitted to the sorrowing earl, Hester Downes, now triumphing in the success of her schemes so long and so boldly pursued.

Scarcely had Lady Charlotte taken Harriet's hand, when her spirit seemed to undergo a change. Her dignity of manner

failed her then, in the presence of inborn worth; and, truly, rightly humbled, she threw her arms around her friend's neck, and shed refreshing tears on her bosom. She had abandoned herself to repining at the thought that she was homeless, but recalling Harriet's state on her father's death, she reproached herself as most ungrateful to Providence, and in an instant felt strengthened in the best resolutions.

The child's "Don't cry, dear aunty," soon caused her to wipe her eyes, that she might bestow her caresses on him; and then, even whilst the tears still lingered on her cheek, she turned with a bright smile to Harriet. She and Charles, messengers of peace, although they knew it not, had accomplished their mission.

"Now you look like yourself, dearest friend," said Harriet;—"your emotion shocked me, coming as I had done to congratulate you on your brother's marriage."

“Oh, no—no—no, not congratulate; you cannot think I shall like the sister-in-law whom I have got. You surely know Hester Downes?”

“Very slightly; we speak when we meet in our walks. On my return from India, she wrote me a note excusing herself from calling on me at Mr. Hardy’s on account of the foreign person in his house, of whom she could not approve. Had she, do you think, any suspicion respecting Eugenia’s real connexion with her family?” Harriet asked.

“No,” replied Lady Charlotte, “her feeling was only jealousy of my brother’s admiration of her beauty. But why did the capricious Eugenia refuse Philip? In her I should have had a friend in my sister-in-law.”

“I cannot tell why she should refuse the honour of being Countess of Woreham. Assuredly it cannot be respect for the memory of Sir Walcot which inclines her to remain unmarried.”

"She has some preference—some attachment, doubtless," said Lady Charlotte, musingly. Then a minute afterwards, "Let me however, speak to you on a more interesting subject. The time must soon come when you will have to resign your mother's rights over Charles. You and Mr. Gordon will be all the better without such a charge in commencing your new life. Besides, knowing my sister's intention, I should not be justified in abandoning my claim so far as to permit him to be taken abroad."

Harriet's countenance acknowledged that this was right, yet tears glistened in her eyes as she turned them on the boy."

Lady Charlotte went on, "My determination is, to establish myself in your old cottage under the chesnut trees, and be a true Arcadian henceforward—as true a one as you, if that be possible. Will it not satisfy you if I bring up your boy there, in peace and happiness, and virtue? Shall I not there

best preserve my influence over my first child, and keep up the affection now existing between the cousins ?

“ Oh, my dear Lady Charlotte,” exclaimed Harriet, warmly, “ what could his father have wished for more ? ”

They talked long of this pleasant plan. It was to be put in execution immediately, that Lady Charlotte might be completely installed in her pretty abode before the new countess's arrival at the castle—and that Harriet might once more enjoy some happy days in the old rooms, and look at the old dear bits of landscape from the windows. Was Lady Charlotte homeless now ? No—because she was going to have a dwelling full of tender interests and affections—a dwelling securely her own. Her heart began to beat in unison with the marriage bell, cheerfully, if not merrily. And that which had commenced between these friends in tears and deep feeling, ended in childlike, loving prattle.

They forgot the time until the dusk of evening recalled them to its flight, and then there was an announcement, unexpected by either—Mr. Gordon. He had arrived on one of his sudden visits, and came thither to accompany Miss Aveley back to Mr. Hardy's. She soon set out with him, leaving little Charles with his aunt for the night.

Lady Charlotte looked after the lovers for a few minutes, as they departed, then with a sigh turned into the house—but the child was there, and she was again as cheerful as before. As to Harriet and Gordon, their talk was full of happiness—yet, even then, often did they pause as they had done before in their walks around our village—pause, in a strange rapture of surprise to find themselves arm in arm on those quiet paths, after their long wanderings.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
Yon orange sunset waning slow :
From fringes of the faded eve,
O happy planet, eastward go ;
’Till over the dark shoulder glow
Thy silver sister world, and rise
To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the vale below.
Ah, bear me with thee, lightly borne,
And move me to my marriage morn ! ”

TENNYSON.

GORDON left us after that visit, to come back only once more. He must soon return to Smyrna, and not return alone. Besides, there is a little tour in the Highlands to be made first.

Once I said I should have been glad to put Harriet's hand in his. Much more glad was I afterwards to see John Hardy do that—to see him do it cheerfully, unfalteringly. Sure that the adored of his heart would be as carefully guarded as he would have guarded her, by one in whom all the best qualities of a protector were to be found, and whom he warmly loved, his calm face as he gave Harriet away at the altar expressed something nobler than joy. For, if it were not possible for him to be happy, because the thought of her departure would intrude, it was at least possible to be grateful in the promise of so much happiness to her, and pure and unselfish was his gratitude.

Could he, however, at such a time have thought of himself, how many causes of gratitude might he have numbered, left to him after the loss of her presence at his hearth. First, and best of all, was Benjamin's affection, now bestowed on him fully

and frankly ; and with the certainty of this affection, there was the conviction that he was no longer of his old mind and spirit. There was a change in him which his uncle understood, though not a word had been said on it by either of them—tacitly he had made confession and had been absolved. Next in the good John's blessings he would have placed Eugenia's love. Perhaps, the value of this he had not yet been able rightly to estimate, having had Harriet still with him. Perhaps he had not quite credited the newly acknowledged Lady Downes, when she said that she would never go to Downes House, but remain with him. The time may come, when left more dependent on that heart which is bound more closely to his, than to any other on earth, by the secret, never broken tie to Benjamin, she will be as dear to him as Harriet is.

But I am wandering from the marriage, at which John Hardy, simple as his manners

were, and unformed in the school of the world, went through his part with dignity. His nephew too was present. Like those who shrink from a cut in the finger, but submit without a shudder to the necessary amputation of an arm, he had not been able to visit Harriet with Gordon, but manned himself to stand by and see her lost to him for ever.

I have forgotten myself strangely in thus permitting my hero to occupy my thoughts. In commonest courtesy, the bridesmaid should be named before the bridegroom's attendant friend. The bridesmaid was Lady Charlotte, now the established mistress of the cottage, and looking bright and youthful in a security of happiness which for many years she had not known. She was indeed, in her graceful elegance and self-possession, the queen of the little assembly—Harriet being unable to assume the ease requisite for that part. Her quick changing colour

told how full her heart was, how nearly her sensibility had obtained the mastery.

As she trembled on Gordon's arm, reminiscences of India filled his thoughts—but joyfully, for there came with them something which he had learnt there—a lore from the very heart of nature, the words of the Hindoo bridegroom to the bride. “May the regents of space, may air, the sun, and fire, dispel that anxiety which thou feelest in thy mind, and turn thy heart to me! Gentle in thy aspect, and loyal to thy husband, mayest thou be fortunate! Amiable in thy mind, and beautiful in thy person, mayest thou be mother of valiant sons! Fond of delights and cheerful, mayest thou bring us prosperity!” Thus, in his gladness would he have spoken, but he dared not with such pagan phrases shock our worthy curate.

The ceremony therefore passed off as most such ceremonies do, in form and order.

Eugenia was not present at it. She received the party on the return from the church at Mr. Hardy's, and did the honours of his house with a charm of native sweetness and grace. But she was pale, and I thought,—for I was one of the few guests,—that there were traces of tears on her cheek.

I was there—but surely, no one will ask me to linger to the last, and describe the farewell of Angus and Harriet to their friends. No, no—it is over—they are gone, that is all. But they are not gone from us like those whose place shall know them no more. There is her old friend, there is the child to draw Harriet back; and, then there is something else, for pointing to the spot where her father is laid, which she and Gordon had often visited, she says to him, as she once said to John Hardy, “If it please God, I should like to return here to die, to be buried there.”

We will not speak of death. She will

return to live long among us. But they are gone, and the village, as I take my evening walk, is more than usually quiet and dull. And when I retire to rest, it seems to me that our wedding party has been rather a grief than a joy. Feeling this myself, I do not like to think how desolate Eugenia and John Hardy must be when they lay their heads on their pillows—when in the silence of the night their hearts tell over all that made so dear, the companionship which they have lost.

And how was Benjamin trying to forget this? He was again a guest in that cottage which he had loved so much, but not loved enough. He sat late with Lady Charlotte, conversing more openly and frankly with her than he had ever yet done. He spoke more of himself—perhaps, because on that occasion he was more careless of his subject than he had ever been. There was something gnawing at his heart, and he would forget it in any way.

Could he have been trying a little of Hester Downes's philosophy, when, as once recorded, she was vexed at losing Lord Woreham, and found no way of easing her heart but by eternal talk? If he were trying this, being a man of sense, it only made him more amiable. He had no folly to bring out, and gained rather than lost, by throwing aside his reserve. So Lady Charlotte thought, and by her powers of conversation, she ably seconded him and encouraged him.

He did not detail to her his deeds and works—did not relate his history; yet he so poured out his thoughts that his career was almost known to her, and in his unintentional sincerity he became deeply interesting to one who had lived so much in what is factitious. He was sure he had told her nothing that he guarded in his heart as proper to be hidden; but, when he left her, she was mistress of one side of his double

ecret. She had divined his love for Harriet—that love unnamed to any human being; the other part of his mystery, his former passion for Eugenia, she did not guess.

Perhaps in that home of Harriet's youth, his own youth was too warmly recalled;—perhaps his early days of thought and hope inspired by Mr. Aveley, ending in self-seeking ambition were too profoundly regretted, and that which had at last sharpened this regret was betrayed. He talked late into the night—as late as he had ever done in former years with Mr. Aveley, when he was rather the eager listener than the talker. The hour came, however, when he must go, and as he rose to take leave, Lady Charlotte said, “Your visits are often so hurried, that I do not know whether I may hope to see you again. Do you leave to-morrow morning?”

“No; I must have some conversation with Lady Downes, and I shall remain a few days.”

“Then I shall expect to see you again in this cottage, which you love so much for old times. You will spend to-morrow evening with me?”

This invitation, so simple, was given with a grace of sincerity, beyond the reach of art, implying a desire to see him, too flattering to be answered carelessly—it could not but be accepted. Yet he was not Lady Charlotte’s guest, as he promised to be; she received from him a note of apology, and he departed again for Liverpool.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Now the last day of many days,
The loveliest and the last, is dead.
Rise, memory, and write its praise!
Up to thy wonted work ! ”

SHELLEY.

On the day following the evening spent at Lady Charlotte's cottage Benjamin was at his uncle's, and for the first time since Eugenia and he had met there, they were left together. Before the good man they had conversed cheerfully, now they did not speak; yet their silence was not such as they had once known, when the heart says so much, though the lips give no utterance.

Hardy stood by the mantel piece, his arm resting on it, his head bent, but raising himself suddenly, "Eugenia," he said.

Never since their renewed intercourse had he called her by her name. She started almost trembling, and, not daring to trust her voice, she only answered by looking up into his face. He turned away, but went on—"Eugenia, I have been thinking a great deal about your boy; he must not be spoiled—and he will be in more danger of that now than he has ever been. I know no one who could make him so useful a member of society, who could educate him so well as Gordon. Could you persuade yourself to part with Eugene, if I could persuade my friend to take charge of him for the sake of the good he may do?"

She had time to recover her composure during his words, still her voice had the thrill of emotion in it when she replied, "But Eugene, and I, and our friends, have

decided on a guardian; we hope that he will take that charge which you would give Mr. Gordon."

"Ay? Whom have you chosen?"

"You, Benjamin."

"Oh, Eugenia, you are too good!—too good!" he answered, with much feeling. "I do not deserve such confidence—I am not fitted for the task. Gordon is a man of education, I am only a man of business. Your son must be instructed suitably to his rank."

"We can have a tutor, if you will only accept the guardianship," said she; "and how can he better acquire habits suited to his rank, than under your guidance and Lady Charlotte's?"

"Lady Charlotte's?"

"Yes, when you are married to her."

"I!—I married to Lady Charlotte!" he exclaimed. "How could such an idea enter your head? It is your simplicity, Eugenia,

your ignorance of English life, which makes you imagine such a thing possible."

"But it is possible," she replied, gravely; "I thought you knew it to be so. Lady Charlotte will love you, if you choose. You cannot have a more amiable wife."

"Ah, Eugenia, I can have a more generous one! This hand is due to you alone; it shall be yours, if you will, and thus you shall secure to your son his guardian."

And now she trembled not, her voice was firm, but she gently refused his offer. She had learnt that the discipline of Providence comes through the enforced sacrifice of all that we have loved too well, and in her humility she took part with Providence against herself. Besides, to her simple faith there was no patching up of broken virtue, as the world will have it there is.

That afternoon, Mr. Benjamin Hardy had a long conversation with a lawyer, on his

accepting the guardianship of the young baronet, as there were necessarily many legal matters and forms to be settled. It was easy to see that under his vigilant habits, everything bade clear for having the estate relieved from its incumbrances in a few years, and put in a good condition.

At that time the mansion—Downes House—was likely to be unoccupied. Lady Hoodborough, a tenant from year to year, had decided on giving it up. She was going to Rome, where a physician, much patronised by the English nobility there, was making wonderful cures among them. Her lord, being again a very busy political character, it was not probable would find time to go to Italy; so that he and she were in no more danger of meeting than if she had remained in England, which was satisfactory.

When the lawyer spoke to young Mr. Hardy of endeavouring to let the house, since Lady Downes would not live in it, he

said, in a thoughtful way, "Never mind,—we shall see about it."

The meaning of this was fully explained some months afterwards, when he took Downes House himself, gave up business, and left Liverpool. I augured from this that he had got over the weakness which had once made him dislike the idea of living at the place where his origin was known—where every step by which he had risen to fortune could be seen and counted by the whole community. I guessed, also, that he had found in our quiet nook, what would be a compensation for the loss of that kind of pleasure, which men find in an energetic pursuit of some distant and doubtful object.

It is certain that, had he continued half-a-dozen years longer his railway speculations, he might have made a much larger fortune than that with which he was contented—in the common phrase, "a princely fortune." And thus, at last, he proved

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Gordon to be not quite truly possessed of the prophetic sight, for he turned his back on Fortune. She only does well for us when not tempted too far.

Harriet Aveley's marriage had taken place in the autumn; the following autumn, the twelfth since Benjamin Hardy set out in life, that of our village millionaire took place. After the wedding tour, he brought his bride, Lady Charlotte, to Downes House, on just such a gusty day, half cloud, half sunshine, as he, when our hero, left his home. He saw the valley under the same light and shade as on that day, but it was from an altogether different point of view. He was looking towards Downes House, and he said, "What a lucky dog that Sir Walcot is!"

Now, he was looking from Downes House, and he said—I don't know what he said. Eugene Downes and little Charles Aveley were on the steps of the hall door, to welcome Lady Charlotte Hardy to her new home.

CHAPTER XXV.

“ Enfin, vaste et puissante idée,
Plus forte que l'esprit humain,
Toute âme est pleine, est obsédée
De ton nom qu'elle évoque en vain !
Préférant ses doutes funèbres,
L'homme amasse en vain les ténèbres,
Partout ta splendeur le poursuit !
Et, comme un jour qui nous éclaire,
Le monde ne peut s'y soustraire
Qu'en se replongeant dans la nuit ! ”

LAMARTINE.

It is but fair to inform you, kind reader, that what follows is not for you, if interest alone in my hero and his belongings and surroundings, has led you thus far in my pages. I should gladly have given you

some of the tidings which John Hardy received from time to time in the letters from *his East*—that is, from the place of Harriet's abode. Or, I should have entered on a little description of the manner in which his nephew and Lady Charlotte took their place among the aristocracy both of birth and money of their county. I could have given you a summary of a speech of Benjamin's when he was solicited to allow himself to be put in nomination as one of its representatives in parliament. The deputation that waited on him consisted of some of the most respectable persons of his neighbourhood, who were all highly pleased with the exposition of his sentiments which he made to them. He spoke most ably, bringing forward views, now strongly conservative, and again strikingly radical; so that upon the whole, he startled many and convinced none,—an effect which truth very often produces.

All this, however, with its consequences I cannot tell, my village friend insisting on other matters as more important. He says that the slight, nay, almost slighting manner in which I alluded to Miss Aveley's details respecting India in her letters to John Hardy has been offensive to him. As that sagacious nobleman, Lord Woreham, was startled by some of her opinions after her return to her native country, my friend thinks that other persons may also be startled by them. He has desired me therefore to make use of some documents which he had collected, and which seem to corroborate by facts of a similar nature, those facts which had given birth to her peculiar sentiments.

I proceed then, to satisfy his conscience and my own, yet not without recalling what the great Locke has said; that "he who follows his own thoughts in reading, can hope for approvers in the small number alone, of those who make use of their own

thoughts in reading ; by others he will not be permitted without censure to follow his own thoughts in the search of truth, when they lead him ever so little out of the common road."

Perhaps that in which I did Miss Aveley least justice, was in not dwelling at greater length on the shock given to her religious feelings, on finding herself in a land of paganism, in which Christianity appeared either to have been ignorant of its high mission, or to have shrunk from it. The time is past when a dignitary of the church could be applauded in his derision of attempts to convert the natives of Hindostan to our religion—when he could be praised, if in order to frighten us from conversion, he should write thus—"A missionary who converted only a few of the refuse of society, might live for ever in peace in India, and receive his salary from his fanatical masters for pompous predictions of universal conver-

sion ; but if he had any marked success among the natives, he could not fail to excite jealousy and discontent. The reputation, dignity and wealth of the Brahmins depend upon the preservation of the present superstitions ; and why is it to be supposed that motives which are so powerful with other human beings are inoperative with them ? If the Brahmins however, are disposed to excite a rebellion in support of their own influence, no man can doubt that they have it in their power to effect it.

“ Another reason for giving up the task of conversion, is the want of success. In India, religion extends its empire over the minutest actions of life. It is not merely a law for moral conduct, and for occasional worship ; but it dictates to a man his trade, his dress, his food, and his whole behaviour. His religion also punishes a violation of its exactions, not by eternal and future punishments, but by present infamy. If an Hindoo

is irreligious, or in other words, if he loses his caste, he is deserted by father, mother, wife, child, and kindred, and becomes instantly a solitary wanderer upon the earth; and the state of such a degraded man is worse than death itself. To these evils a Hindoo must expose himself before he becomes a Christian.

Harriet Aveley would have asked the reverend writer, "Were not these precisely the conditions under which the Divine Founder of Christianity began his task? Under which his apostles carried it forward?"

But she would have addressed to him no question of any kind when he proceeds with his assertions to this effect: "An African or Otaheitan might not perhaps be less honoured by his countrymen if he became a Christian; an Hindoo is instantly subjected to the most perfect degradation. A change of faith might increase the immediate happiness of any other individual; it annihilates

for ever all the human' comforts which an Hindoo enjoys. The eternal happiness which you proffer him, is therefore less attractive to him than to any other heathen, from the life of misery by which he purchases it. Suppose we were to be driven out of India to-morrow, and to leave behind us twenty thousand converted Hindoos, it is most probable they would relapse into heathenism ; but their original station in society could not be regained."

To which touching regret for the loss of position of the twenty thousand can only be responded, Alas, reverend teacher, you know not then, after all, what Christianity is !

But although we may at home turn away from a high priest of worldliness presenting us with such teachings as those, how little have we yet done in India to prevent simple minds, imbued with truth, from being shocked by what is witnessed there, and grieved by all that opposes the progress of

religion! If many reach that land with the creed of our fair villager, must they not, like her, feel that the acting up to that creed becomes almost too painfully difficult for a woman. And what then was her creed? How did it differ from yours or mine? I know not; but this it was, that life was given not for happiness, but for the knowledge and fulfilment of duty; love, not for enjoyment, but for devotedness. That the Great Taskmaster measures our progress towards him, not by what we have suffered, but by how much we have desired to diminish the suffering of others, by how much our efforts have been directed to the saving and perfecting of our brethren.

Thus then she felt, perhaps ignorantly, that in trying to attain this aim of life we should have no fears of the result in offering to our brethren the best of gifts, spiritual truth. With the poet she wept that man should dread its splendour, and, in avoiding

it, plunge again, with the idolater, into the darkness of heathenism.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ When Europe sought your subject realms to gain,
And stretched her giant sceptre o'er the main,
Taught her proud barks their winding way to shape,
And braved the stormy Spirit of the Cape!
Children of Brama! then was mercy nigh
To wash the stain of blood's eternal dye.
Did Peace descend, to triumph and to save,
When freeborn Britons crossed the Indian wave?
Ah, no!—to more than Rome's ambition true,
The Nurse of Freedom gave it not to you!
She the bold route of Europe's guilt began,
And in the march of nations, led the van!”

CAMPBELL.

BUT to leave matters of opinion, I must
proceed to some of the facts with which I

have been furnished. One might smile when a young lady compares her uncle, a colonel in India, to a Roman proconsul or proprætor. Let us, however, hear what a grave authority says.

“We are in India what the Romans were in Western Asia, with all the aid of modern political science to enforce our rule. That we are not more equitable, more merciful, or more beneficent than they were, there is the testimony of many witnesses before our Indian committees to shew. It is said by some that no virtues are to be found among the native races in India except military virtues, and that by annihilating from amongst them, as we do, the soldier and the gentleman, we leave only the *caput mortuum* of a race, from which the spirit, worth, and even industry, have evaporated.

“By military virtues is meant, no doubt, the sense of independence, never to be enjoyed in uncivilised countries by those

who do not wear a sword. Would it not then be best to leave to some parts of India a chance of making progress in its own way, with its own virtues, since we cannot impose ours on it? Its almost feudal system in many of its principalities, with their valiant chiefs and hardy soldiers, offer great facilities for self-government.

“The case would be very different if we could call India our empire; if our race could be perpetuated there, and if we could metamorphose the natives into any affinity with ourselves. But whilst we form the functionary, proprietary, and educated class; whilst we are governors, masters, soldiers, judges, tax-gatherers, landlords, and police, to hope that we can solidly found an empire on the unmitigated helotry beneath us is madness. Why then labour perpetually to extend the surface, the cares, and the difficulties of our Indian rule?”

A question only replied to, in the short

period which has elapsed since it was made, by the progress of further conquests in India. And yet one of the very earliest of our historians of that land had adorned his tale by pointing a moral in it—which was to this effect regarding the conquerors of India who had preceded us.

“Rebellions, massacres, and barbarous conquests make up the history of this fair country (which, to an ordinary observer, seems destined to be the paradise of the world); the immediate effect of the mad ambition of conquering more than can be governed by one man: for the whole empire being portioned out to rapacious governors, they domineered over the governed until their spirits were sufficiently debased, so that at last they were able to persuade them that their common interest lay in taking up arms to render these governors independent.

“It would appear as if the warm climates, and more especially the open countries

situated within them, were destined to be the seat of despotism. The Patan, Mogul, and Tartar conquerors in Hindostan and China, however hardy at first, have, in a course of ages, sunk into the same state of effeminacy with their subjects ; and, in their turn, have with them received a new master."

That the Mogul race were something more than mere hardy soldiers, another writer on Indian matters has given us a proof in the plan, left to his posterity by the great founder of the Mogul empire, for the administration of his government.

"I appointed," he declares, "a man of illustrious dignity to watch over the conduct of the faithful ; that he might regulate the manners of the times ; and appoint superiors in holy offices ; and establish in every city and in every town a judge of penetration, and a doctor learned in the law, and a supervisor of the markets, and of the weights, and of the measures.

“And I established a judge for the army, and a judge for the subjects; and I sent into every province and kingdom an instructor in the law, to deter the faithful from those things that are forbidden, and to lead them in the truth.

“And I ordered that in every town and in every city, a mosque, and a school, and a monastery, and an alms-house for the poor and the indigent, and an hospital for the sick and infirm should be founded, and that a physician should be appointed to attend the hospital; and that in every city a government house and a court for the administration of justice should be built; and that superintendents should be appointed to watch over the cultivated lands and the husbandmen.

“And I commanded that they should erect structures for the reception of travellers on the high roads; and that they should make bridges across the rivers, and that the ruined bridges should be repaired.”

On this short extract from a very long document, the historian remarks,—“There is a selection of four of the most important objects of government, in making a provision for which the first care and attention of the Mogul sovereign are employed; namely, the administration of justice; the instruction of the people; the facilitating of intercourse; and, his own knowledge of all that is transacted in his name.

“Though the provision for all these objects may have been incomplete, some progress was made in the art and science of government, when they were pointed out as primary objects of regard; and still more, when something considerable was really done for their attainment.

“India had,” he goes on to say, “been governed well by the English, as they asserted. But ‘governed well’ in their sense meant simply, governed, and nothing more; governed somehow or another.” It is the historian who speaks, not I who speak.

“India had been governed well as compared with what? As compared with the highest state of advantage in which human nature can be placed? This, no one would have the boldness to state. As compared with the ancient Mogul government? A mighty boast! That the pride of British legislation should produce something not quite so bad as what was called ‘the despotism of barbarians.’ But even this assertion was, when it was made, a matter of doubt. It is now no longer so.”

“Of all crimes, that most deeply fraught with mischief is robbery, from the alarming sense of insecurity which it strikes into the mind of almost every individual of the community in which it prevails. This assumes an aspect particularly terrible in India, where the robbers form themselves into confederacies, and perform their crimes with a combination of forces which it is not easy to resist. This class of offences has not

diminished under the English government. It has increased to a degree highly disgraceful to the legislation of a civilised people,—to a degree which seems to have had no example under the native princes of India,—to a degree surpassing what was ever witnessed in any country in which law and government could with propriety be said to exist.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

“Stranger. Was the wealth
Stored fraudfully, the spoil of orphans wronged,
And widows who had none to plead their right?
Townsmen. All honest, open honourable gains;
Fair legal interests—ships to the east.
Stranger. Why judge you then so hardly of the dead
Townsmen. For what was left undone—for sins, not one
Of which is mentioned in the Decalogue.
They, I warrant you, served no other gods
Than those of the creed—bowed to no idols,
But,—their money bags.”

SOUTHEY.

“You forget,” said Colonel Aveley on one occasion to his neice, “that we came to India solely for commercial purposes—that

our empire here is that of a company of traders."

This is forgotten or misunderstood by many, that we must be allowed to take from the historian already quoted, a few particulars respecting it, and respecting the strange idea that "war had become the traffic of the English in India."

"The company when formed made public its resolution 'not to employ *gentlemen* in any place of charge, but to sort their business with men of their own quality.' However, in about a century afterwards, we find these *men*, without *gentlemen* among them, recommending their servants to employ armed vessels to enforce the observations of treaties and grants, if temporising expedients failed. Next, a large ship, the Defence, accompanied by a frigate, arrived from England, under the command of a captain of the name of Heath, with instructions for war. The company's servants had

made considerable progress by negotiation, in regaining their ancient ground, when Heath precipitately commenced hostilities, plundered the town of Balasore, and proceeded to Chittagong, which he found himself unable to subdue. These proceedings exasperated the Emperor, Aurung Zebe, and exposed the company's establishments to ruin in every part of India. The factory at Surat was taken; the island of Bombay was attacked, the greater part of it taken and the governor besieged in the town and castle.

“Orders were issued for the expulsion of the English from Aurung Zebe's dominions, but they stooped to the most abject submission, and with much difficulty obtained an order for the restoration of the factory of Surat, and the removal of the enemy from Bombay. Negotiations were continued with earnest endeavours to effect a reconciliation. The trade of the strangers was felt in the

Mogul treasuries, and rendered the emperor, as well as his deputies, not averse to an accommodation. But the interruption and delay sustained by the company made them pay dearly for their premature ambition.

“It was now laid down as a determinate object of policy that independence was to be established in India, and dominion acquired. Instructions were given in the following words:—‘The increase of our revenue is the subject of our care as much as our trade; it is that which must maintain our force, when twenty accidents may interrupt our trade; without that we are but as a great number of interlopers united by royal charter, fit only to trade where nobody of power thinks it their interest to prevent us; and upon this account it is that the wise Dutch, in all their general advices which we have seen, write ten paragraphs concerning their government, their civil and military policy, warfare, and the increase of their revenue,

for one paragraph they write concerning trade.' ”

It thus appears at how early a period those who so frankly name themselves ‘chartered interlopers’ looked forward to empire, allowed their trade to become an object of contempt, and, by necessary consequence, a subject of neglect. A trade a subject of neglect, is a trade without profit, as will be abundantly shown in the sequel.

But before this sequel comes, much has to be performed, and there is but one century in which to perform it. The imperial majesty of the great Aurung Zebe, with his thirty millions sterling of revenue and his armies of one hundred and fifty thousand men, has passed into the hands of the poor, degraded Shah Aulum, without those accompaniments of treasures and troops.

“The whole of India has during that period been gradually *absorbed* by the company, the rejectors of gentlemen. Hear the

end of the great Mogul Empire. "After being seventeen hours under arms the soldiers took up fresh ground near the river, and encamped opposite to the city of Delhi. An intrigue had been opened with the emperor before, promising him, in case he should find the means of placing himself during the present crisis under the protection of the British, that every demonstration of respect and attention would be paid towards his majesty, and that an adequate provision would be made for him, his family and his household.

"To this secret communication a secret answer was received. It exhibited much distrust of the English, complaining of their late conduct, and declaring an apprehension that, when they gain possession of the country, they may prove forgetful of him. With all this, we find that on a certain day his majesty was induced to be pleased to direct his eldest son and heir apparent, the Prince Mirza Akbar Shah, to conduct the

British commander-in-chief to his presence. Minuteness is important in these details. The prince was to have arrived at the commander-in-chief's tent at twelve o'clock, but did not reach the British camp till half-past three o'clock p.m.

“By the time his royal highness had been received, re-mounted on his elephant, and the whole cavalcade formed, it was half-past four o'clock. The distance being five miles, the commander-in-chief did not reach the palace at Delhi until sunset. The crowd in the city was extraordinary, and it was with some difficulty that the cavalcade could make its way to the palace. Its courts were full of people anxious to witness the deliverance of their sovereign from a state of degradation and bondage. At length the commander-in-chief was ushered into the royal presence, and found the unfortunate and venerable emperor, oppressed by the accumulated calamities of old age, degraded authority, ex-

treme poverty, and loss of sight, seated under a small tattered canopy, the remnant of his royal state, with every external appearance of the misery of his condition.

“The governor-general speaks of this event as delivering the unfortunate and aged emperor, Shah Aulum, and the royal house of Timour, from misery, degradation, and bondage. Who would not imagine, on hearing this language of the English ruler, that he was about to restore his imperial majesty his lost authority?—to those territories from which he had been extruded only by successful usurpation and rebellion,—territories of which the possessions held by the company formed a material part? Or, if not to give him any of the usurped territories which had fallen to the lot of the English, if not to give him even that tribute which they had long withheld; at any rate, to bestow upon him those territories of which Scindia had deprived him, and which the English had just re-taken, or were about to re-take?

“Not an atom of this. The English were to restore no territory. They were, therefore, to hold his ‘imperial majesty’ still degraded from sovereign power—still in bondage as much as ever. The very words of the governor general are, that only so much ‘regard should be paid to the comfort and convenience of his majesty and the royal family, as was consistent with the due security of their persons’ in other words imprisonment.”

So far the historian. And we have no regrets for the degradation of the royal inheritor of the throne of the great Timour, and the great Aurung Zebe. We have had a share of their spoil. And calmly saying “*it must be so,*” though we profess not to have adopted the Muhammadan’s creed, we are contented to repeat with the poet,—

“Kingdoms and states that long had stood,
Have from the summit of high fortune’s flood,
Ebbed to their ruin fast!”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“Oh, turn their wealth to arms, and make,
War for thy beloved sake,
On wealth, and war, and fraud ; whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.”

SHELLEY.

“As a specimen of the way in which petty wars may originate,” writes, not Miss Aveley, but a medical gentleman in India, “you must know that there is a quarrel between two chiefs in this neighbourhood, the one refusing to acknowledge the other. He who refuses is an old man, who traces his pedigree through a long line of ancestors

up to the progenitors of giants and demi-gods ; whereas the young man, his neighbour, is an upstart, and worse, a rajah of the Company's creation.

“The rightful heir of the territory which he now possesses was a minor at the death of his father. He was given in charge to a man of low birth, who had once been a common soldier, but who was not wanting in boldness and ambition. . . Availing himself of the anarchy of the times, he seized on the sovereign power and forced the rightful heir to take refuge with a distant Mogul chief or khan.

“The usurper kept possession of the territory, and at his death left it to his son, him whom our old chief will not acknowledge. He is, however, retained in it by the Company ; for, when driven to shifts to raise money for the Burmese war, a certain person high in command, thought it a good stroke of policy to try to involve the rich

natives as much as possible in the schemes of government, because it was believed that they were anxiously watching the result of that ruinous campaign which seemed to threaten our existence in the East.

“ To effect his purpose he wished to induce them to invest their money in government loans. The scheme proved a lamentable failure. But the son of the petty usurper of whom I have been speaking, came forward with fifty thousand rupees ; and to mark the sense of gratitude for this paltry sum, and to induce others to follow his example, the political agent of the district was desired to invest him with the dignity of rajah. The aristocrats of the district, however, will not recognise him ; but always style him by the inferior title of zemindar, for, in their estimation, a dignity conferred by the English is no dignity at all. The zemindar is in reality a collector of taxes ; though being attended by a guard, and

having the power of administering justice, he possesses some of the attributes of a land-owner."

The policy which directed indifference to the case of the young rajah deprived of his rights, and the patronage of him who had usurped his power, is benign when compared with that which had at other times been taken as a guide. In speaking of a more powerful rajah than the last-mentioned, our historian gives the following details.

"Notwithstanding the absence of criminality on the part of the rajah, it was resolved that he should be destroyed."

"'It is evident,' write the rulers, 'that it is dangerous to have such a power in the heart of the province; for, unless the Company can engage the rajah to their interest, by a firm promise of support in all his just rights, it is certain that, should any troubles arise, and a favourable opportunity of freeing himself from his apprehensions of the nabob,

he would take part against him, and might be a dangerous enemy. The propriety and expediency, therefore of embracing the present opportunity of reducing him entirely, before such an event takes place, are evident.”

“Never,” continues the historian, “was the resolution taken to make war upon a lawful sovereign with the view of ‘reducing him entirely,’ that is, stripping him of his dominions, and either putting him and his family to death or making them prisoners for life, on a more accommodating reason.”

“We have done the rajah great injury; we have no intention to do him right: this constitutes a full and sufficient reason for going on to his destruction. Such is the doctrine. The practical improvement is obvious. Do you wish a good reason for effecting anybody’s destruction? First do him an injury sufficiently great, and then, if you destroy him, you have in the law of self-defence an ample justification!

“In the opinion of the presidency no danger attended the operations necessary for the destruction of the rajah. But the point to consider was, the conditions on which the nabob should be accommodated with his destruction and the complete transfer of his dominions. He without much difficulty accepted the conditions; and it was agreed that no peace should be concluded with the rajah, unless it was absolutely impossible to effect his destruction. The general was furnished with his instructions, and the nabob bargained with the troops by a sum of money for the plunder of the town, if it should be taken by storm.

“After about a month’s siege, a passage of twelve feet wide was completed across the ditch which surrounded the walls; and the breach was so considerable that the enemy expected the assault by daylight the next morning, when twenty thousand men were prepared to defend the breach.

“This hour being permitted to pass, they expected no further attempt till the evening; but when the sun was in the meridian and intensely hot, and the garrison had mostly retired to obtain a little refreshment and repose, the English troops were drawn out without noise to the assault. The success of the stratagem was complete. The troops entered with scarcely any resistance, or any loss, and the rajah and his family were taken prisoners in the fort.

“In giving an account of the capture of the place the next day, the English general writes, ‘The situation of the rajah is truly pitiable. I do therefore hope, as the place has fallen by the English arms, that the Honourable Board will exert their influence that the prisoners may be treated agreeably to the rank they once held in this country.’”

CHAPTER XXIX.

“No blame be to you, sir, for all was lost.

————— The army broken,
And but the backs of Britons seen, all flying.
————— The enemy full-hearted,
Lolling the tongue with slaughtering, having work,
More plentiful than tools to do't, struck down
Some mortally, some slightly touched, some falling
Merely through fear.”

SHAKSPEARE.

A VOLUME might be filled with passages from the great historian, of that portion of the globe which we have agreed to name British India, to shew that occurrences similar to those in which our village friends had to take a part, are far from being un-

common there. For instance, we may select an Indian retreat, as thus described :—

“ The position and steadiness of the troops enabled them to sustain several onsets, persevered in till night, when the enemy drew off, and being joined by his infantry and guns, was expected to renew his attacks on the following morning.

“ The English general, not regarding his position as tenable, and fearing lest the enemy should get in his rear, adopted the resolution of retiring. After two marches, rendered exceedingly harassing by the rain which fell in torrents, and the enemy which pursued them, they were unable to reach the rivulet which they had to cross, till the morning of the thirteenth, when it was found impossible. They halted on the fourteenth to procure a supply of grain, and attempted on the fifteenth to continue the march, but they could not proceed with the guns which had sunk so deep in the mud as

not to be extricable. The camp was without provisions, and all the neighbouring villages were exhausted.

“The detachment was then under the necessity of proceeding, but the country was so completely overflowed, that the troops could hardly march. Having reached a river about daybreak on the twenty-second, it was found not fordable. And three boats were procured with which one of the battalions was transported across with the treasure.

“On the morning of the twenty-fourth, the river having fallen, the general began to transport his baggage. The greater part of it, and four battalions had crossed, and he was preparing to follow as soon as the remainder and the camp followers had effected their passage, when the enemy brought up their infantry and guns, and opened a heavy cannonade on the small body of the English that still remained on that side of the river. The general led them directly to the charge,

and they succeeded in carrying some guns, but they were soon overpowered by excess of numbers, and with great difficulty effected their retreat, covered by the fire of one of the battalions on the other side, which advanced to the bank of the river to protect them.

“The enemy prosecuted their advantage, and the general was obliged to abandon his baggage, and fly to a fort which he reached on the night of the twenty-fifth.

“On the morning of the twenty-sixth, the enemy’s cavalry encamped around the English in separate bodies. At the same time a correspondence was detected between some of our native officers and the enemy. Decisive measures were immediately adopted to check the mischief, yet two companies of infantry, and a large proportion of native cavalry made their escape. The same day, the general quitted the fort, having spiked the last remaining howitzer, and with the men in an oblong square, began to proceed.

“On the night of the twenty-seventh, he took possession of a ruined fort, and at noon next day continued his retreat. The English had, however, no sooner cleared a ravine near it, than a desperate charge in three separate bodies, was made upon them by the enemy’s horse. The sepoys had sufficient discipline to reserve their fire till the enemy had almost come up to the bayonet. It was then given with effect, and the enemy immediately turned, and fled in all directions.

“About sunset on the twenty-eighth, the troops were almost exhausted with hunger and fatigue, when they reached a pass at the entrance of which the general halted, with a view to pass the night there. But the enemy’s guns approached, and began a galling fire. He was therefore obliged to prosecute his retreat. The camp was dark, the camp followers and baggage mixed with the line, the troops were thrown into confusion; order could no more be restored, and

the different corps concluded their retreat in great disorder, the last of them reaching Agra on the thirty-first of August.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Ill-fated race ! the light that leads to heaven ;
Kind equal rule, the government of laws,
And all-protecting freedom, which alone
Sustains the name and dignity of man :—
These are not theirs."

THOMSON.

"INDIA is a country," writes the medical gentleman whom we have already quoted from, "the natural resources of which are yet so unimpaired, that it may be said to be only coming now into useful existence, if its rulers will but permit it. Its vast and fertile provinces impress the mind with the conviction of its being gifted with perpetual

abundance, and of its possessing the imperishable elements of national security. It holds out commercial advantages of the first order, and encouragement of every kind to the man of enterprise ; whilst it presents to the philosopher and the enthusiast a grand and varied field of observation.

“Yet what in our observations are we obliged sometimes to contemplate ? Such scenes as this :—A district over-assessed ; the farmer being ruined is cast into prison, in the desire to squeeze from him his last rupee. By some legerdemain he was to coin rupees in jail, and the land by lying fallow was to be improved. The one idea was as good as the other !

“The farmer grew poorer ; the land got choked with a brushwood which only years could eradicate. A lamentable instance of this I saw in a country, which, before it had been devastated by war, was a rich province for a length of time. For miles, in one un-

interrupted course, tracts of cultivation were to be seen waving to the breeze. Every night were to be heard the tinkling of the small bells of the herds and flocks, as returning from their mountain pastures they wound their way along the woodland paths.

“Being one of the independent sovereignties of the Mogul empire it shared the fate which befel the Moslem rule. But though it lost its independence, it continued rich and populous. What is it under the British rule? With a fine navigable river flowing through it, with a town well situated, it has sunk into decay, and is surrounded by terrific jungles. ‘Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens and shades of death, a universe of death.’

“A most remarkable remnant near one of these wastes is a grove of cypress trees, looking a fit haunt for the ghosts of departed sages. Several attempts have been made to induce cultivators to settle there once more ;

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but, although the ground is rich, and offered for the trouble of clearing, they will not resort to it. The few who have gone were attacked by disease, soon followed by death."

How such a change as has been just described may have taken place—and how it must have taken place in many instances over large districts—will be readily understood if we consider the nature of the governing power in India, as it is described by the historian.

"The relations established," he says, "with the princes of India were different in different circumstances. From those with whom their connexion was most intimate, it had become the object of the British government to take away not only the military, but likewise the civil power, in the countries to which their titles respectively extended, and leaving them the name of sovereign, to make them simply pensioners of state. With most this object had been completely attained.

“To this point the relations of government had advanced by degrees. At first they were neither very strong nor very definite. The English, for their own security, found it necessary to aid the princes in defending themselves, and the princes agreed to reimburse the English for the expenses which they incurred.

“The powers of government, that is in India, the powers of the sovereign are divided into the military, and the civil power; the one consisting in authority over the military force; the other in the administration of the civil or non-military affairs of the state, collection of the revenue, judicature, and police.

“The English arrived at the first remarkable stage, when they made the princes with whom they were most nearly connected, strip themselves of their military power, to place it in the hands of the English. At this stage, affairs remained for a considerable

number of years. The sovereigns placed in these circumstances, held their civil power in a state of absolute dependence. When the civil power also was taken away from them, nothing of sovereign remained but the name.

“Of one of these Indian princes we are told, that when his power was threatened by an enemy, he was induced to apply to the English for assistance. Being made to understand that it would be granted only on the condition of his permanently confiding his defence to a British force, that is, of his transferring his military power to the hands of the English, he deliberately preferred a situation of degradation and danger with nominal independence, to a more intimate connexion with the British power.

“This prince is described as showing extreme imbecility in his counsels. His effort, however, to maintain his authority free from the control of those whose course of policy

he had witnessed, had in it something not quite deserving the epithet imbecile. Of course it was an effort altogether unavailing.

But the historian goes on—"The man who carefully visits the sources of the East Indian history, is often called to observe, and to observe with astonishment, what power the human mind has in deluding itself, and what sort of things a man can pass upon himself for conclusive reasoning, when those against whom his reasoning operates are sure not to be heard, and when he is equally sure that those to whom his discourse is addressed, and whom he is concerned to satisfy, have all the requisites for embracing delusion ; to wit, ignorance, negligence, and, in regard to the particulars in question, a supposition at least, of concurring, not diverging, interests.

"It is truly surprising that the object which is marked by the British ruler as the most profligate ambition, and the most

odious injustice, cruelty, and oppression in an Indian prince to aim at, is the same object, exactly, at which he himself was aiming with an uncommon degree of ardour and perseverance, and at expense of many sacrifices.

“When this object was attained, let us look at a remarkable circumstance attending it. This was, that the British government engaged to make itself the instrument of the despotism of the prince in whose territories they had made their acquisitions, by promising to defend them. The English were to become the executioners of every possible atrocity towards his own subjects, of which he might think proper to be guilty. They were bound, by an express stipulation, not to interfere between him and his subjects, how dreadful soever his conduct in regard to his subjects might be. But the moment his subjects should take measures to resist him, whatsoever the enormities against

which they might seek protection, the English government engaged without scruple and without condition to act immediately for their suppression and chastisement.

“Where was now the doctrine laid down regarding the deposition of princes whose government was bad? Where was the regard to that disgrace which we had been told redounded to the British name, whenever they supported a government that was bad?”

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Be thine the kingdoms, be the scepters thine ;
But realmes and rulers thou dost both confound,
And loyall truth to treason dost incline ;
Witnesse the guiltless blood poured oft on ground,
The crowned often slain, the slayer crown'd,
The sacred diademe in pieces rent,
And purple robe gored with many a wound ;
Castles surprizd, great cities sackt and brent :
So mak'st thou kings, and gaynest wrongfull govern-
ment."

SPENSER.

HAVING touched on the fall of an unimportant chief in India, some details respecting the fate of an important one, taken from the same historian, so often quoted, may be interesting.

“After the victory his body was with some difficulty discovered. It was still warm ; the eyes were open, and the features not distorted, so that for a few minutes it was doubtful whether he was not yet alive. There were four wounds, three in the body and one in the temple, the ball of which having entered a little above the right ear had lodged in the cheek.

“His dress consisted in a jacket of fine white linen, loose drawers of flowered chintz, the usual girdle of the East, crimson coloured, tied round his waist, and a handsome pouch, with a belt of silk, red and green, hung across his shoulder. He had an amulet on his arm, but his ornaments, if he wore any, were gone. He was, when he lost his empire and his life, about fifty years of age.

“In person he was rather above the middle size in height, had a short neck and square shoulders, and now bordered on corpulency, but his limbs were slender and his

feet and hands remarkably small. His complexion was brown, his eyes large and full, his eyebrows small and arched, his nose aquiline; and in the expression of his countenance there was a dignity which even the English, in spite of their antipathy and prejudices, felt and confessed.

“One of the great defects of his mind was a want of judgment. For an Eastern prince he was full of knowledge. His mind was active, acute, and ingenious; but in the value which he set upon objects, whether as means or as ends, he was almost perpetually deceived.

“Besides, a conviction seems to have been rooted in his mind, that the English had formed a resolution to deprive him of his kingdom, and that it was useless to negotiate, because no submission to which he could reconcile his mind, would restrain them in the gratification of their ambitious designs. Nor was he deprived of grounds

of hope, which, over a mind like his, were calculated to exert a fatal influence. He never could forget the manner in which his father had triumphed over a host of enemies by shutting himself up in his capital, and defending himself till the season of the rains; nor had all his experience of the facility with which Europeans overcome the strongest defences in his power to rear, yielded him on this point any decisive instruction.

“The original defects of his mind, arising from the vices of his education, appear to have increased as he advanced in years, and with peculiar rapidity after his losses. The obedience which the will of princes, especially eastern princes, is habituated to receive, not only renders them wretched when it is opposed, but gluts and palls them with the gratification. Each recurring instance becomes by familiarity insipid, or rather disgusting, and leaves the mind

restless and impatient for a new gratification. This serves to account for the fickle and capricious disposition which so commonly marks the character of princes, and in general prevails in them to a greater or less degree, in proportion to natural vivacity and susceptibility of their minds.

“The temptation to please, rather than to serve, excluded the eastern prince, as it does other princes, from the benefit of counsels wiser than his own. Accustomed to hear from those who approached him, that every sentiment which he uttered exceeded in wisdom that of every other man, any difference with his opinions struck him at last, as a mere demonstration of folly.

“As a general, he possessed no other talents than the vulgar ones of great activity, courage, and that turn for stratagem, which the cunning of a ruder age has a tendency to produce.

“As a domestic ruler, he sustains an

advantageous comparison with the greatest rulers of the East. He bestowed a keen attention on the conduct of his government, from which he allowed himself to be diverted neither by pleasure, nor by sloth. He made a methodical distribution of his time for business, in which he was laborious and exact; but in which his passion for detail made him frequently waste that attention upon minor affairs, which ought to have been reserved for the greatest.

“He had the discernment to perceive, what is so generally hid from rulers in a more enlightened state of society, that it is the prosperity of those who labour with their hands which constitutes the principle and cause of the prosperity of states. He therefore, made it his business to protect them against the intermediate orders of the community, by whom it is so difficult to prevent them from being oppressed. His country was accordingly, at least, during the

first and better part of his reign, the best cultivated, and his population the most flourishing in India; whilst under the English, whole provinces were hastening to the state of deserts, and their population was the most wretched on the face of the earth.

“It would not be reckoned pardonable by Englishmen, if an historian were to omit ambition, and the hatred of the English among the ingredients in the character of this prince. But ambition is too vulgar a quality in the minds of princes, to deserve particular commemoration; and, as for his hatred of the English, it only resembled the hatred the English bore to him, and which the proud are so prone to feel towards all those who excite their fears, or circumscribe their hopes.”

THE END.

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